

# Crisis Handling and Conflict Resolution in Papuan and Local Communities in Demonstration Cases Commemorating the 2019 New York Agreement

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## Abstract

Conflicts and crises are situations that cannot be predicted, can come at any time, and cannot be avoided, so crises management actions and conflict resolution are needed from demonstration conflicts to commemorate the New York Agreement in August 2019 in Malang City. The situation that occurs is a government crisis situation that requires conflict resolution and crisis management by Malang City so that crises and conflicts can be muted so that they do not continue. The research to see how Malang City handles this crisis and conflict resolution uses a constructivist paradigm with a qualitative research type. This study aims to find strategies to reduce crises and reduce ongoing conflicts. The method of data collection carried out in this study was an interview with the Public Relations of Malang City Government, supported by data collection, which was carried out through documentation. The Apologia theory and the conflict theory used in this study show that Malang City uses the deny strategy, conciliation strategy, transcendence strategy, and bolstering strategy. Malang City Government also conducts negotiations and acts with the Papuan people who live in Malang, so the strategies used are conflict resolution and crisis management strategies that produce win-win solutions so that conflicts are reduced and not prolonged.

*Keywords: Crisis, Conflict, Communication Strategy, Conflict Resolution.*

## A. INTRODUCTIONS

Conflicts and crises are situations that every individual, organization, institution, and government wants to avoid. Falkheimer (2013) explains that crisis and conflict are unavoidable and even unpredictable and can arise in various ways. Similar to crises that can happen to anyone, conflict situations can also occur to humans and humans, organizations and organizations and even humans and organizations, such as what happened in the conflict between Papuan students and the local community of Malang City.

The conflict occurred in 2019 in Malang City, East Java. This is a conflict in the form of clashes, arguments, and throwing stones at each other between Papuan students and local communities in the Rajabali area, Jalan Basuki Rahmad, on August 16, at 9.30 WIB. It started with a demonstration conducted by the Papuan

Student Alliance (AMP) to commemorate the New York agreement. Demonstrations that caused chaos due to anarchic actions damaged several public facilities, threw stones at residents, and blocked roads. Through detik.com, it was explained that the chaos made Asfuri, Malang City Police Chief AKBP, review the granting of scholarships to students studying in Malang. In addition, there is also the same statement that was also made by the Mayor of Malang. This then gave rise to allegations of discrimination by Malang against Papuan students. Furthermore, this statement triggered a conflict that later emerged in Surabaya City. The emergence of conflicts in Surabaya made the issue in Malang City even bigger.

Several characteristics can be behind the occurrence of conflicts, among others; gender, social strata, religion, economy, ethnicity, culture, and politics are different between humans and others which will eventually lead to feelings and emotions. This is because human nature is basically homo conflictus. Novri (2009) explains homo conflictus as a trait possessed by humans who will always be involved, either intentionally or unintentionally, in conflicts and differences or contradictions.

The conflict that occurred involving the secondary community (immigrant communities living in Malang area, namely Papuan students) with the primary community (original communities or local communities) was a conflict that later became a crisis. These conflicts and crises are organizational and government crises when viewed through eight factors according to the definition of crisis presented by Rosenthal & Kouzmin (1997). The following are eight factors that characterize the government crisis, namely; 1). Raising questions about the government's ineffective authority in handling problems; 2). The problem is getting bigger; 3). The mass media's surveillance of current issues is increasing; 4). The crisis and the organization's handling will become a public memory and can be used to evaluate the next organizational crisis; 5). In a crisis, the public sees the crisis from the government leadership itself without seeing how the crisis can occur; 6). In crises, people often interpret that the crisis reflects the government's priorities toward the public; 7). The bureaucracy of the sector enlarges in the eyes of the public; 8). Political, social and economic contexts often influence government decisions.

Public relations has the function and task of conveying information to the public through government policies, actions, government obligations, and information related to government activities (Millet, 1954). Therefore, either conflict or crisis resolution requires the role of public relations as a management function. Who can build, maintain and improve conditions and relationships (Cutlip, Center, and Broom, 2009) and a problem solver for the community. Based on public relations as a management function, the research will refer to Malang City government's strategy in dealing with the crisis and resolving conflicts between Papuan students and local residents.

## **B. LITERATURE REVIEW**

The news that appeared in various media created a crisis situation. Conflicts and crises are situations that require particular actions to resolve, deal with, and reduce threats and impacts arising from crises and avoid situations that can exacerbate the situation (Coombs, 2007a). Crisis resolution in the field of Communication Science is known as Crisis Communication. Falkhaimer (2013) explains that crisis communication is a theory and practice to resolve a crisis or reduce and control the level of risk that has the potential to turn into a crisis. The handling of the conflict is based on Apologia's theory as a crisis response strategy. Apologia theory is a crisis communication theory used to resolve crises in companies, institutions, organizations, and governments. Apologia is a critical theory that provides a series of strategies to deal with a crisis. Apologia provides identification methods and a series of strategies to respond to crises as an effort to defend oneself when in a situation of being accused (Ware & Linkugel, 1973).

When in a crisis, the first strategy based on Apologia theory is denial or denial. Hearit (2009) explains that rejection or denial by stating " we did not do it " will tend to be carried out by companies, organizations, institutions, or governments to deny and provide accurate, precise, and fast information as one of the appropriate actions to handle the crisis. The second strategy is Bolstering or strengthening the denial that has been done by providing substantial positive information so that it becomes information that has good validity and reduces negative public perceptions. Next is Differentiation which is a delay in assessing stakeholders to the public until the organization has substantial evidence to inform the public. Next is Transcendence. Transcendence is an act of broadly redefining the context of the problem causing the crisis of an institution, organization, or government to make the problem evident and have positive value for the public.

Furthermore, the last strategy of Apologia theory is Conciliation. Conciliation or Conciliation is an effort to make peace and cooperate with the parties to the conflict. The organization will plead guilty and offer an apology. In general, the reconciliation strategy will be followed by efforts to repair the damage and promise that it will not happen again; then, the reconciliation strategy will also provide compensation to victims who have been harmed.

The ongoing crisis is caused by the conflicts that occur. Therefore, in addition to handling the crisis, a resolution is also needed as conflict management reduces or stops conflicts that occur. Robbin (1998) provides eight explanations on how to manage conflict to be used as a resolution or handling of conflict. Explanations of conflicts in the community include; Avoidance, which is to stay away from conflicts that occur. Each of the parties involved will equally distance themselves from the conflict in the hope that, over time, the conflict will resolve itself (Robbin, 1998).

Informal problem solving, namely making an agreement by considering the convenience of the parties involved. This method is carried out and conducts deliberation and consensus among friends and peacefully. Mediation, this method involves third parties, namely other people who have nothing to do with the

problem. Conflicts often become challenging to resolve and require the involvement of other people, thus requiring a third party who has an essential role in peaceful settlement efforts. Executive dispute resolution approach, if mediation cannot resolve the conflict, then the resolution of the conflict requires other parties other than third parties as a settlement effort. Then, in Arbitration, the three conflicting parties cannot make their efforts to resolve it, so it requires a settlement out of court, namely an arbitration decision that binds the conflicting parties through legal considerations. As an arbiter of the matter, the arbitrator can be appointed by both parties or the competent body. The arbitrator acts as a listener or witness who hears evidence from both parties. Judicial approach. It is an effort to resolve conflicts involving the law, namely the courts. Conflicts that continue and drag on will be resolved through the courts and involve judges and experts. The legislative approach is a way of resolving conflicts involving members of the legislature or members of political parties through deliberation conducted by the House of Representatives (DPRD). Negotiation is an act of finding solutions, solving, and resolving conflicts that are often carried out by parties involved in conflicts. Moore (2014) explains that negotiations must be carried out if the problems that occur continue and drag on. Negotiations have a formal situation and use the method of assertiveness and high cooperation to produce a win-win solution agreed upon by both parties.

### **C. METHOD**

Through a constructivist paradigm used as a perspective to understand the complexity of reality, this study uses a qualitative method to explain the problems or conflicts that occur between Papuan students and the local community of Malang City that cause the crisis. Qualitative research with results in the form of data expressed in sentences through in-depth data mining (Kriyantono, 2014). Furthermore, what is meant by primary citizens or local residents of Malang City is that every individual born in Malang works and lives in Malang. These people are ordinary residents, government officials, and Malang City Civil Servants.

Using interview data collection techniques and documentation studies, the primary data source of this research is the Public Relations Staff of Malang City, who has the task of resolving cases that occur. Following the explanation of Moleong (2011) that the selected informant is someone who understands the situation and conditions of the research background so that it is relevant to the research topic. While additional data sources in the form of photos posted on Malang City Public Relations social media account, sources of information obtained from Malang City Public Relations website, and information through mass media.

The selected research subject is Malang City Public Relations, and the object of research is crisis management and conflict resolution. This study provides an overview and understanding of the reality that is happening with the aim of knowing the strategies for handling crisis and conflict resolution by Malang City Government.

#### **D. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Malang City seized the public's attention. Malang City, which became the origin of how the conflict occurred, became the attention of the mass media which highlighted it continuously and continuously. The impact of mass media coverage had a significant impact on this conflict. The conflict, which is constantly being highlighted by the media and has become a public concern, is one of the current crises. This is under what was conveyed by Steven Finks through (Butterick, 2012) that a crisis is a situation that occurs when the intensity of events increases and attracts the attention of the news, media, and government.

The conflict between Papuan students and the local Malang community, which has become a crisis, requires handling crisis communication and conflict resolution. According to Erik, Malang City Public Relations Staff, both conflict resolution and crisis resolution are carried out in two ways: through the media and through vertical agencies above Malang City Government. The handling and resolution of the conflict are carried out by the Public Relations of Malang City as follows:

**Strategy to refuse or deny (Deny Strategy).** Rejection or denial is carried out through clarification by the Mayor of Malang. Clarification is the primary step for public relations to deal with problems. The clarification was made as a quick response from the public relations team. Malang City Government took the clarification step to deal with the crisis. To give a statement, someone who has a significant influence on an institution or organization is the right person to give a statement (Coombs, 2007a). In this crisis, the Mayor of Malang, as someone influential, gives statements directly to the media as a way of clarifying and providing information to the public. Clarification was carried out through a press conference by Malang City Government. The conflict that occurred also stated that Malang had discriminated against the Papuan community residing in Malang City.

At the time of clarification through a press conference that had been carried out, the Mayor of Malang denied it and stated that this was not true. Following the Apologia Theory, Malang City made a rebuttal or "we did not do it". The Deputy Mayor of Malang also carried out clarification at the invitation of the Ministry of Home Affairs. Clarification contains denying the circulating news that Malang City will repatriate Papuan students. The following is a statement made by the Deputy Mayor of Malang. "As has been emphasized by the Mayor of Malang in various media, there is no repatriation". The Mayor of Malang also re-informs how the incident happened so that there is no more missing information.

**Conciliation Strategy.** Through the Conciliation Strategy or Conciliation seeks to make peace with the parties in conflict. Malang City Government directly apologized. One thing that becomes very important is to apologize directly to the parties to the conflict. Malang City was handling the conflict and made an apology by the Mayor of Malang to Papuan students who were studying in Malang City. Through an interview with Erik, Public Relations of Malang City, on August 20, 2019, mentioned that Malang City invited Papuan students. The meeting was held

with eight students who were representing Papuan students for lunch at a restaurant in the Kertanegara area, Malang, East Java. This lunch meeting was held for direct clarification and became a moment of apology from Malang.

According to Lewicki, Weiss, & Lewin (1992), negotiations must be carried out if the problem persists. An apology from Malang City Government directly is an act of negotiation carried out by Public Relations of Malang City as a conflict resolution by reducing the ongoing conflict. In the event held non-formally, the Mayor of Malang explained to the students that "it is not true that there are reports that say Papuan students want to be sent home. Things that cause anxiety and restlessness will not happen".

The meeting, which also became the momentum for Malang City's apology to students, became a conciliation for Malang City for the public. Malang Mayor's explanation that the meeting was a small piece of evidence and a symbol that there is no problem of discrimination against Papuan students in Malang City. Following Apologia's theory that, through Conciliation, the organization pleads guilty and encourages Malang City to improve the situation that has occurred and become strong evidence to be informed to the public.

**Transcendence Strategy.** This strategy is a strategy that is carried out by redefining the context of the problem. This redefinition is done to get a positive value from the public. The definition uses mass media as communication for the public, using a media utilization strategy. Namely, news that appears must be closed with other news. The strategy taken by Malang City for crisis and conflict management is to use the mass media to convey factual information. Under Apologia's theory, namely, Transcendence, it is crucial to redefine the problems that occur (Ware & Linkugel, 1973) so that Government of Malang City uses mass media as a means to explain problems to the public. The media used include, among others, online news coverage, conventional media coverage, Malang City Website, and also Malang City Instagram (with the @humaskotamalang account) to cover controversial news reporting on acts of discrimination in Malang City with clarifying reports stating that the news circulating about discrimination is not valid.

Through its personal Instagram and website, Malang City shares news about what actions have been taken during the conflict period. This is a way to inform the public. Malang City uses mass media as a tool to convey its aims and objectives. Malang City Instagram, @Humaaskotamalang, officially announced the news about the conflict from August 15 to August 24.

Furthermore, when clarifying, the Mayor of Malang also re-informs how the incident occurred so that there is no more misinformation. The Mayor of Malang also re-informs how the incident happened so that there is no more misinformation. According to Malang City Government, the incident occurred when Papuan students took to the streets to commemorate the New York Agreement on August 15. As many as 20 - 30 people from 1,100 Papuan students on behalf of the Papuan Student Alliance (AMP) started the demonstration from 8:55 to 10:30.

The Deputy Mayor's statement means that not all Papuan students take to the streets, and from this number, it is necessary to question whether they are AMP students or others. This statement is a strategy of the transcendence Apologia to re-describe the chronology of the conflict that caused the crisis. The chronology that was conveyed informed them that they would not be right to repatriate Papuan students.

According to Coombs (2007) that the main character has an important role in providing a statement of a problem; in this study, the Mayor of Malang carried out Transcendence, namely redefining the situation that occurred from the beginning to the end of the actual chronology when conducting a conference on the chronology of problems. Then, through the media, they apologized and attended meetings with the Governor of Papua with a message of peace. This will imply that Malang City and the Governor of Papua already have a good relationship so that it can influence the Papuans.

Furthermore, through the mass media, Asfuri, Malang City Police Chief, used to inform that there is no special supervision for Papuan students either at the Alliance Secretariat or at the residences of Papuan students and ensure their safety. The Mayor of Malang or Malang City Police Chief, through the statements issued, both gave a sense of security to Papuan students. Hence, Malang City Police Chief took action to reduce and reduce conflicts that occurred.

**Bolstering Strategy.** On the relationship between City Government and Media. Bolstering strategy as a strategy and effort of Malang City Government to reduce negative public perceptions of the government). The mass media has become a means of bolstering Malang by utilizing the media and establishing good relations with the media. Malang City Government maintains good relations with the media, Mass media is a tool used to communicate an event to the public. The media has an essential role in every organization, institution, and government. This is because the media can play a role as a determinant of how events are conveyed to the public at large through the agenda-setting owned by each media actor. The important role that the media has, so good relations are needed between the organization, the media, and the government. Mass media can be a tool to strengthen the statement that Malang City owns.

In accordance with the Apologia theory, namely, bolstering, that vital information can reduce negative public perceptions (Ware & Linkugel, 1973). Maintaining good relations with the media is one of the ways Malang City Government handles crises and resolves conflicts that occur. Through interviews conducted with Malang City Public Relations, Sutiaji, Malang Mayor, summoned several media and clarified the situation. This good relationship makes it easier for Malang City to make corrections to misleading reports that are circulating by including interviews with the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, and Head of Malang City Police so that it becomes a bolstering or information reinforcement that clearly Malang City did not say to expel Papuan students from Malang City.

The bolstering strategy also emerged when the Mayor of Malang explained that the issue of repatriation arose due to misinterpretation by the media during clarification. Mis-interpretation occurred because the media who were not directly present at the time of the interview wrote things that were not appropriate from the existing recordings.

Furthermore, in addition to the negotiations carried out, Malang City conducts mediation by involving several parties not related to the conflict, namely the arbitrator. In handling conflicts and crises, Malang City performs conflict resolution in addition to using the media, namely, using Vertical Agency communication, namely communicating and explaining the situation that occurs with the agencies above Malang City Government. Vertical communication, which is also arbitrary to resolve the conflict, is carried out to the Ministry of Home Affairs and the East Java Provincial Government to submit the recorded data that the Mayor of Malang has made to the mass media, presenting reports on student demonstrations from Baskesbangpol, so that they can explain the facts and how the actual chronology is. So that the explanation of the chronology of the conflict can be the same and consistent, and there will no longer be confusing reports in each media. So that further conflicts can be minimized or reduced.

Malang City takes these steps as a form of crisis communication or crisis management and conflict resolution. However, through interviews conducted about the conflicts that occurred, Malang City Public Relations did not consider the conflict to be a crisis because the conflict was not prolonged. Malang City Public Relations considers that the problem is a leadership problem from a leader. A leader's leadership will see how the leader overcomes the problems that occur, overcoming problems quickly. In addition, it also sees how a leader does not answer things that are not mastered with the answer "could be," which will cause more significant problems later. Although they do not consider it a crisis, the things discussed are part of crisis management and conflict resolution that must be done.

Crisis handling through Apologia theory and Conflict Resolution resulted in the crisis that occurred in Malang City being well resolved. Malang City Government argued that Malang City Government did not provide a statement that Papuan students would be repatriated and provided clarification to correct false reports that were already true. According to the Apologia theory, the second strategy used is to make peace with the conflicting parties by making an apology or called Conciliation. This Conciliation was carried out at a lunch meeting with students held by the Mayor of Malang. The Transcendence Strategy is the next strategy by Malang City Government by providing an explanation of the chronology of the problems that occur. The last thing that Malang City Government did was to provide factual information to the public. This is done as an effort to reduce negative perceptions, and this strategy is called the Bolstering strategy.

Through the conflict management and resolution strategies carried out by Malang City Government, in the end, produces a Win-Win solution that is beneficial for both parties. The resulting win-win is in the form of a conflict situation that only



lasts a few days, subsides and is not prolonged in Malang City and Papuan students who live in Malang City get security guarantees and live side by side with primary residents, that is local residents or local residents of Malang City and residents secondary, namely Papuan students who live in the city of Malang.

In research on the conflict between Papuan students and the local community of Malang City, the theoretical implication of the Apologia theory used to deal with conflicts that occur between Papuan students and local residents in Malang City is peace for the community and Papuan students who are currently studying in Malang City. Furthermore, the Papuan community will accept the emergence of trust, including Papuan students, by Malang City. Meanwhile, practically, the results of this study can be used as a reference for further researchers that the use of Apologia theory can be used in dealing with crisis cases due to conflict.

## **E. CONCLUSION**

Apologia theory is one of the critical public relations theories as a theory that can handle crisis situations. The demonstration conflict to commemorate the New York Agreement in Malang City, which later became an issue of discrimination due to the issue of repatriation of Papuan students. In the end, it became a crisis due to the growing situation, and increasing media surveillance and the handling carried out by the government will be remembered by the public.

To reduce conflicts and deal with crisis situations, Malang City made clarifications. Clarification is the foremost step for public relations to deal with problems. Through the refutation of the refusal of the absence of a statement of students being sent home or denied strategy, apologies in the meeting held by the Mayor of Malang with Papuan students and also an apology made through the media by the Mayor of Malang and the Deputy Mayor of Malang or what is called the conciliation strategy. The third strategy carried out by Malang City is to redefine the chronology of the problem. This strategy is called Transcendence. According to Apologia's theory, the last strategy used by Malang City is Bolstering. This strategy uses mass media as a tool to inform that the news about repatriation is not accurate, informs apologies, and peaceful activities carried out by the Mayor of Malang. The last is to establish good relations with the media, making it easier for Malang City to communicate with the public.

Some of the handlings of crises and conflicts were carried out by Malang City through apologia theory and negotiations by apologizing to Papuan students. And mediation uses Arbitration, which involves parties not concerned with the conflict. These measures become a strategy for dealing with crises and conflict resolution that result in good conditions. This can be seen in conflict situations that only lasted a few days and eventually subsided and did not last long.

So that the handling of the crisis through the Apologia theory and also the negotiations and arbitrators carried out, in the end, became a conflict resolution that resulted in a win-win solution for both, which are Malang City, which could resolve

a conflict and make the conflict is not prolonged, and the Papuan people would finally feel at peace to live in Malang City.

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