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Research article

Not just about representative: When democracy needs females and their competency to run Indonesian government public relations to management level

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ABSTRACT

The democratic era has promoted transparency, public participation, and open access on public information, therefore, public relations is considered an integral part of the democratic process. The study is not only about genders representation, but also the outcome of involving genders and their competence in managerial positions. This study aims to portray the outcome of employing male and female and their competency in managing government public relations in Indonesia. An online survey on 102 public relations practitioners from various government institutions. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and univariate formula. The research reveals that government public relations have applied two-way communication models and resulted in an excellent outcome on Indonesian democratization. The findings affirm that the emerging democracy has encouraged effective practices and challenge public information, the previous model that government institutions provided. Results show different outcomes on two-way communication when male or female manages the model. On the managerial level, the female practitioners have proper competence implement the model at a higher level than males. Since gender issue in government public relations practices has been little investigated, this study recommends the Indonesian governments to provide more opportunities for female practitioners as part of the top management in public relations divisions. The government needs to change its mind-set that gender issue takes into account not only representativeness but also their competence.

1. Introduction

One of the democratic process that scholars pay attention to is how the government communicates with citizens (Tawakkal et al., 2020). It involves public relations studies. The public relations studies and practices are growing along with the development of democratization and are considered an integral part of the democratic process (Hopkins, 2015), which is always present a vital role in the democratic process, such as election campaigns and image building (Bardhan and Weaver, 2011). Democracy will succeed if the community gets sufficient information about government activities. This information can be fulfilled by making information transparent and accessible. In short, public relations processes are important to manage communication in democratic countries (Berry, 2013; Dolea, 2012; Robertson, 2020; Tantivejakul, 2019; Waymer, 2013).

One of the countries struggling with democracy is Indonesia. The 1998 movement in Indonesia has stimulated democratization that opens more access for the public to express their opinion (Kriyantono et al., 2015, 2017; Siriyuvasak, 2005). It stimulates the increasing need to communicate with the public since the public is more demanding in information disclosure (Waymer, 2013). This situation requires government public relations (GPR) practitioners to provide a model of communication that helps the government to deal with the rapid changes in the society (Huang, 2004) and also to institutionalize government public relations as a sturdy division (Dolea, 2012).

The characteristic of democracy leads public relations practitioners to adopt the transparent communication models, which provide symmetrical communication since the model is an ethical standard for effective public relations for most situations (Bowen et al., 2010). The symmetrical model is inherently ethical because it stimulates the organizations to

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initiate changes in their behaviors to adapt to the public, in contrast to only attempting to change the public's perceptions, opinions, and behaviors (Grunig, 2014; Huang, 2004).

The model is rooted in four prominent communication models that portray public relations practices in the US, UK, and Canada (Grunig and Hunt, 1984). Grunig and Hunt (1984) reveal that 50% of government applied public information model, compared to 15% of regulated business institutions applied two-way symmetric model, 20% of competitive business institutions practiced asymmetric model, and 15% of promotion institutions conducted press-agentry model. At that time, the three countries studied were well-consolidated democracy. Therefore, it is interesting to study how the four models are implemented in the context of Indonesia, which has recently entered the era of democracy.

The models have been widely studied in Asia and Europe (Bosley, 2014; Meng, 2007; Ragozina, 2007). These studies affirm theoretical frameworks from Dolea (2012), Edwards (2012), Garcia (2016), Halff and Gregory (2014), Huang (2018), and Sriramesh and Duhe (2009) that public relations practices are determined by socio-cultural and political context. This situation is likely to occur in Indonesia, which has a distinctive socio-cultural character and is not entirely the same as in Western countries (Gunaratne, 2009). Although it is possible that some Western principles are still being adopted (Garcia, 2016).

This current research aims to depict the dominant model of communication applied by GPR practitioners in Indonesia context: Which model has applied most within in the transformation era of democratic society? Whether most Indonesian GPR practitioners tend to practice public information model, as Grunig and Hunt's (1984) study mentioned above, or is there any other particular models used in the practice?

Furthermore, democracy and public relations greatly influence gender issues, and vice versa (Ahmad et al., 2019; Debusscher and Ansoms, 2013). Democracy is a system to encourage all people to be more involved and participate (Searson and Johnson, 2010) so that it should be able to establish equality and to reduce gender discriminations in public relations practices (Dolea, 2012; Markham and Foster, 2021; Noerdin, 2013; Vianello, 2016). Additionally, this research also looks at the relationship between the communication models and the gender involved in a democratic process. This research also reinforces many scholars to have frequently sought to appraise females' roles to the organizations by emphasizing how female support creates symmetrical and excellence communication (Fitch, 2010; Horsley, 2009).

Referring to the literature discussion over-mentioned, this research portrays the outcome of employing male and female and their competency in managing GPR in Indonesia. This study is expected to foster public relations theories and practices in Indonesian context since Indonesia has not had many academics to support the growth of public relations sciences and practices (Kriyantono and McKenna, 2017).

2. Literature review and formulating propositions

2.1. Government public relations and democracy in Indonesia

Public relations had begun in 1945 when Indonesia proclaimed its independence and had been developed into modern public relations in the 1950s when some multinational companies, state-owned companies, and government institutions placed public relations into their organizational structure (Putra, 2008). The development of GPR practices in Indonesia is not as fast as in other Asian regions due to the organizational leaders' misconception regarding GPR functions (Simorangkir, 2013). During the authoritarian regime, GPR division was perceived for employees who would be retired, and its functions were only for relaying information, a protocol, and a journalist in resident.

Democracy in Indonesia has created a new environment for GPR practices. Although Indonesia is a new democratic country, its democracy is towards a better quality because of the emergence of various government regulations, such as press freedom law and public information

disclosure law, making relation processes and information accesses more transparent (Kriyantono et al., 2017). This situation has challenged GPR to relay information regularly because the public becomes more aware of and active in striving for its right for information (Dolea, 2012). It is assumed that Indonesia is different from the situation in Thailand that is still a constitutional monarchy and makes the practices of GPR still on publicity, propaganda, and information dissemination only (Tantivejakul, 2019). The quality of the communication system determines the implementation of public service and supports successful organizations in which the government is required to maintain its reputation (Broom and Sha, 2013).

As a result, the GPR practitioners need to evaluate the implementation of their programs periodically since "Accountability and measurement are important principles of the process of organization management" (Tymson et al., 2004, p. 100). The standard of evaluation, which dominates the research of public relations, is the excellent theory, a standard measurement of effective public relations across diverse countries (Grunig et al., 2002; Kriyantono and McKenna, 2017; Halff and Gregory, 2014; Mundy, 2016; Thurlow et al., 2017). The principles are also required for measurement in new democratic countries (Dolea, 2012). The theory contains four communication models, namely press-agentry, public information, two-way asymmetric, and two-way symmetric (Grunig and Hunt, 1984).

These models were made based on the flow of communication, the ethical aspect, type of channels, and interest parity between the parties. GPR is a press agentry when the practitioners apply more propaganda for getting mass media publicity. The public information model is a type of one-way communication to produce selected information to the public, in which the GPR primarily decides the relevant, significant, and accurate criteria of information. GPR practices can be grouped into the two-way asymmetric when they have concerned about the public responses and feedback, but this model is more direct to persuade the public to adjust with the government organization and not vice versa. Furthermore, a two-way symmetrical communication model generally centralizes on respecting the goals of the organization and the public by creating relationships, building goodwill, prioritizing dialogue fully, supporting mutual understanding, and cooperation with its public (Grunig and Hunt, 1984).

Two-way symmetrical communication has been perceived as the best model since it is the most ethical and effective that focused on dialogue (Bowen et al., 2010; Kriyantono, 2017), which is more effective to build positive attribution for the organization in crisis (Kriyantono and McKenna, 2019). However, other studies portray different findings for possibilities. Bosley (2014) reveals that the symmetrical communication model is the best for a non-profit organization in the United States. Meng (2007) explains that press-agentry and two-way asymmetric become the most common models practiced in China. Petersone (2004) describes that press-agentry is the most considerable model influenced by economic and political situations in Latvia. In Kenya, two-way symmetrical is in the first position, followed by press-agentry, two-way asymmetrical, and public information (Kiambi and Nadler, 2012).

In sum, there is a possibility of different implementation of communication models, which is possibly reasoned by different organization social, political, economic, and cultural contexts of different countries. As a result, democracy that occur in Indonesia can also affect the current communication models of GPR. With the existing transparent public information regulations, the authors perceive that democracy in Indonesia are going better. It can be concluded that the better quality in a democracy leads the better quality in the GPR practices (Dolea, 2012; Waymer, 2013) is also happens in Indonesia. Hence, the first proposition formulated is:

P1: Democracy has promoted the Indonesian government organizations to become more transparent than in the authoritarian era; therefore, the GPR tends to practice a symmetrical communication model instead of the public information model.

2.2. Gender issue in public relations

The number of females in public relations has increased more than that of males in some countries in accordance with the blooming of female working in the public area due to gender equality in a democratic society (Simorangkir, 2013); therefore, females dominate the number of public relations practitioners (Fitch, 2010; Place and Vanderman-Winter, 2018; Santoso, 2021). Moreover, public relations is perceived as a gendered profession (Verhoeven and Aarts, 2010), female concentrated or female-dominated (Pompper and Jung, 2013), feminization of the profession (Fitch, 2010; Kriyantono and Rakhmawati, 2020; Simorangkir, 2013), and patriarchal industry (Yaxley, 2013).

Although dominating the profession, previous research reveals that the status and the role of females have been under subordinated by the males; that is, male practitioners have still dominated top position on the public relations divisions (Erzikova and Berger, 2016; Place and Vanderman-Winter, 2018; Pompper and Jung, 2013). Females are perceived to contribute to technical jobs while males are described for managerial roles in industries (Santoso, 2021). Females are either virtually invisible in historical records and public relations publications in the United States during 1940–1970 (Horsley, 2009), and their experiences are removed from public relations histories in Britain during 1970–1989 (Yaxley, 2013). In Europe, female practitioners are perceived as not influencing strategic planning and decision making within the organization (Verhoeven and Aarts, 2010). In Rusia, female practitioners are perceived by the male as a secretary (Erzikova and Berger, 2016). In Indonesia, research carried out nearly a decade ago revealed that "Public relations merely involves hiring an attractive woman to represent the organization by saying pleasant things about that organization." (Simorangkir, 2013, p. 13).

In addition, the practices remain become the contestation of power relations in terms of gender. The roles of male and female practitioners are determined by male worldviews which are majority in dominant coalition of the organization, because masculinity and feminine are constructed through communication within the organization (Belephant, 2017). Studying the industrial public relations practices, Simorangkir (2013) reveals that the above situation also occurs in Indonesia that industrial organizations perceive the females as front-liners that lookism is present and physical attractiveness is essential in public relations practices.

However, it is still possible to achieve better conditions than the results of the previous research. The authors perceive that the functions of public relations practices are possible to be conducted by both female and male practitioners. Public relations roles should not only be determined by physical attractiveness aspects but also by expertise, skills, and good conducts (Grunig et al., 2002); therefore, it is assumed that females have the ability to conduct public relations activities as good as a man.

Furthermore, if it is associated with democracy, Indonesia should reduce gender discrimination (Noerdin, 2013) because democracy is a system for the role and participative building from all people (Searson and Johnson, 2010). Public relations will be excellent if role diversity is adopted (Grunig et al., 2002). The critical public, as well as freedom of speaks, requires public relations practitioners to have good communication abilities. At this point, some research reveals that female practitioners are perceived to have good communication features, such as talkative, more attractive, having more ability in building relations, multitasking, and more competent for negotiating (Juliano, 2015). It is linked to other studies that female characters are perceived as more flexible, sociable, friendly, and better in influencing or persuading people (Siregar, 2011), which every public relations practitioner needs to make it look appealing for their public (Juliano, 2015).

In the context of the gender issue, it is perceived that a growing democracy allows a better position for females in the GPR field. This is further strengthened by data that Indonesia is able to narrow the gender gap by approximately eight percent between 2008-2020 (Wulandari, 2020) and to increase the number of women's participation as legislators, political party managers, senior officials and managers, enrolment in secondary and tertiary education (Heriyanto, 2020). The typical abilities possessed by females, both communication skills and multitasking, can also be a driving factor for the shifting, so there have been changes in terms of female's position in the practice compared to males. Hence, this study investigates the second proposition:

P2: Female practitioners also tend to apply two-way symmetric communication models.

3. Research methods

An online survey was conducted by distributing copy of questionnaire that contained variables from four-model of communication of public relations (Grunig and Hunt, 1984), which were also applied by Meng (2007); Petersone (2004); Ragozina (2007) (Table 1). The questionnaire did not require a validity test because, referring to Salam (2009), it is a replication of the use of the questionnaire in the context of different research areas.

The research applied online survey. The authors used convenience sampling. The copies of questionnaire were e-mailed to the practitioners through the Board of Indonesian Public Relations Coordination and The Unity of Indonesian Public Relations. After deploying during Juli-September 2019, 102 respondents (61 males and 41 females) agreed to return the copies of questionnaire. The respondents were heads of public relations divisions from some government organizations, such as the ministerial department (4 practitioners), provincial and district

Table 1. Research questionnaires.

Variables	Statements
Press-Agentry	1. Gaining mass media coverage is your activities' main goal. 2. Preventing negative mass-media coverage through publicity. 3. The success of GPR events is mirrored by the number of target audiences who are visiting the events. 4. You perceives that public relations is the same as publicity.
Public-Information	5. You produce publications as a channel for writing frequently about your services. 6. You have a duty to disseminate only beneficial and accurate information from your organization. 7. Successful GPR is based on the numbers of media coverage toward the organizations, and all media coverage is archived well by public relations. 8. In relaying information, you tend to be neutral than act as a mediator between the organization and its public.
Two Way Asymmetrical Communication	9. You conduct research to find out the effectiveness of GPR program in influencing the public's behaviours. 10. The GPR goal is to influence the public to behave in line with the organization. 11. You conduct a survey of public behaviour before implementing a program to understand the best way for conducting a program to be accepted by the public. 12. You implement programs after evaluating the public behaviours to know the strategy to change these behaviours.
Two Way Symmetrical Communication	13. GPR creates a relationship, mutual understanding, and cooperation. 14. Before conducting the program, you do a survey to find out mutual understanding and the relationship level. 15. GPR aims to alter the organization's perceptions, perceptions, and behaviours and alter the public's perceptions and behaviours. 16. To solve the conflicts, the organization agrees that GPR as a communication facilitator.

Source: Grunig and Hunt (1984); Meng (2007; Petersone (2004); Ragozina (2007).

Table 2. Dantes formula.

Interval	Effectiveness
$(M_i + 2 Sd_i) \leq x \leq (M_i + 3 Sd_i)$	very effective
$(M_i + 1 Sd_i) \leq x \leq (M_i + 2 Sd_i)$	effective
$(M_i - 1 Sd_i) \leq x \leq (M_i + 1 Sd_i)$	effective enough
$(M_i - 2 Sd_i) \leq x \leq (M_i - 1 Sd_i)$	Ineffective
$(M_i - 3 Sd_i) \leq x \leq (M_i - 2 Sd_i)$	very ineffective

Source: Dantes (2008).

governments (52), public universities (16), state-owned companies (16), and public agencies (14). The difference in the number of female and male practitioners does not reflect the real ratio of numbers but is solely based on the practitioners who are willing to become participants (see Table 2).

The authors used descriptive statistic to determine the mean-scores of the variables. The authors also applied a univariate formula (Dantes, 2008) to measure the effectiveness of public relations process. The authors consider that managing communication is a form of public relations program. The formula has been applied in several studies that measure the effectiveness of a program (Hermawati et al., 2015; Sukreni, 2012; Wismanawati and Permana, 2013). The formula works in the following stages:

1. Calculate the maximum score and minimum score with the formula:
   - Maximum score = number of respondents × number of statements of each model × 5
   - Minimum score = number of respondents × number of statements of each model × 1
2. Calculate the ideal mean (Mi) of each model: $M_i = \frac{1}{2}$ (maximum score + minimum score).
3. Calculate the ideal standard deviation (Sd_i) of each model: $Sd_i = 1/6$ (maximum score – minimum score).
4. Discover the effectiveness

4. Results and discussions

4.1. Communication models applied in Indonesia

This research reveals that the GPR practitioners have applied two-way asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical communication models, although the asymmetric tends to be practiced than the symmetrical model (Figure 1).

The combination of the two-way models (asymmetric and symmetric) is called mixed-motives, which is to spread persuasive messages to the public while ensuring symmetrical two-way dialogue principles, has been used in democratization. Organizations may influence the citizen as much as possible to change their attitudes and behaviours, but the public can convince the organizations to understand what the public wants. If there is a conflict of interest, accommodation is needed to reach a solution that is acceptable to both parties.

In Indonesia, symmetric communication is manifested in the concept of "*Musyawarah*", which is a negotiation communication process to solve problems by finding a middle way that benefits all parties. When it comes to community, "*musyawarah*" is held with community leaders, traditional

leaders, religious leaders, and village heads. A cultural approach is often used by practitioners to build close relationships so as to facilitate the communication process in "*musyawarah*." "*Musyawarah*" do not have to be formally held in the office, however, they can be held in community villages during traditional rituals. The practitioners attend various cultural-religious community activities, such as "*tahlilan*" (praying together for the spirits who have died) and "*yasinan*" (reading the holy Qur'an together for the spirits who have died).

Figure 1 portrays that the practitioners claim to apply the four models of communication. This finding links to Grunig and Hunt (1984) arguments that using four models to occur in one organization in different situations, at different times, with other public, and even for the same public at different times is possible. However, if the practices of public relations are on a continuum between two-way asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical communication, it can be referred to as professional public relations (Grunig et al., 2002). The greater tendency to two-way symmetrical communication, the greater level of professionalism it will be. Conversely, if the public relations practices are located on the continuum between press agentry and public information model, it is called the craft public relations (technician skill) (Grunig et al., 2002).

Comparing to Grunig and Hunt's (1984) findings, this research exposes different results. Grunig and Hunt (1984) reveals that the GPR practitioners were more practicing on the public information model, while this current research discloses that GPR practitioners in Indonesia practice both asymmetrical and symmetrical models. Thus, the research establishes the first proposition that GPR in Indonesia has widely practiced two-way communication models. Grunig and Hunt's research was carried out nearly four decades ago. At that time, the US and UK as research objects were mature democracies. Meanwhile, when this current research was conducted, Indonesia was still a country that had just started democratization. It is argued that an acceleration in the democracy quality in Indonesia is driving the quality of the GPR due to the rapid development of internet communication technology. The development of the internet facilitates the public to get information quickly and easily. This argument relates to Bosley (2014) research that non-profit organizations in the US have applied a symmetrical model. Thus, government and non-profit organizations in the US have experienced a model change from public information to symmetrical. Bosley's research was carried out in an era of rapid internet technology development.

The internet has stimulated the emergence of democratization in Indonesia, and this democracy has subsequently encouraged government public relations practitioners to manage websites. Azhary et al. (2017) reveal that 70% of government websites in Indonesia have displayed information at a reasonably transparent level, and 60% of websites are at a sufficiently interactive level. Azhary et al.'s (2017) study reinforce this current research results, which describes that the GPR practice in Indonesia has entered the category of asymmetric communication.

These findings are perceived as the impact of improving democratization in the Indonesian government. Accessibility and openness of public communication can be said as the foundation of democracy, which was launched through some regulations along with bureaucratic reformation since 1998 (Kriyantono et al., 2015; Siriyuvasak, 2005). The effect of democracy also happens in other regions. Having measured fifty websites of government organizations in ten South American countries, Searson and Johnson (2010) prove that the contents of government websites in the countries with transparency laws are perceived as more accountable, accessible, and interactive than the government websites of the countries without transparency laws. Other studies, such as Androutsopouloua et al. (2019); El-Haddadeh et al. (2019); Mergel et al. (2019), conclude that the internet can offer a chance for government organizations to help encourage citizens' participation, engagements, and cooperations with public services. It also links to Bertot et al.'s (2010) study that countries that embrace transparency tend to produce and share more information and are likely to respond to requests for information. Finally, this current research strengthens the premise from other
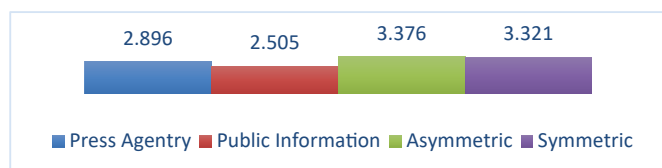
Figure 1. GPR models.

literature, such as Hopkins (2015); Kriyantono el al. (2017); Waymer (2013); White and Imre (2013), that the growth of democracy and transparency establishes the quality of public relations activities.

A higher mean score for asymmetric communication than symmetric communication, as presented in Figure 1, appears to be connected to Ikhsan's (2015) study. Ikhsan (2015) describes that the Indonesian government organizations commonly are still closed, such as centralized, that decision making and planning processes are decided only by the leaders. The government agencies, as closed organizations, usually adopt this asymmetrical model to open communication more openly (Sanmukhiya, 2019).

Therefore, respondents are also categorized into their institutional types. As shown in Figure 2, state universities perform the best symmetric two-way models in which the mean score is the highest among all scores. It seems to be related to the fact that state universities have the lowest score of all asymmetrical model scores. The authors believe that the number of lecturers who are the heads of the public relations division is the cause of this high score because lecturers have the knowledge of theories of public relations and are more flexible in coordinating with other organizational elements. Unlike the staff, lecturers are not too tied to bureaucracy so that they can have access to communication with university leaders more freely. From the interviews, the research reveals that State Universities GPR practitioners have been included as the dominant coalition in organizations, making it easier for two-way communication with the public, even though they are more focused on the external public.

Interestingly, Figure 2 shows that the public information model is in a lower position than the press agentry model, although, according to Grunig and Hunt (1984), press agentry is the oldest model in public relations practice. From the interviews, there has been a symbiosis of mutualism between GPR practitioners and mass media practitioners through a strategy that the authors call a hidden advertising. There seems

a kind of contract agreement and sponsorship media where the media must periodically report positive activities from the organization. An event is written like an advertorial, but without writing an advertorial identity, which makes it difficult for the readers to determine the difference between news and advertising. The authors perceive that this strategy is effective in the context of marketing because readers are not aware that what they are reading is advertising. The readers will naturally be defensive when they are faced with marketing messages. Of course, this situation reduces the public's right to get information and reduce the critical attitude of journalists because the mass media writes news only based on client orders.

4.2. Practitioners in practice

Although either female or male practitioners are more likely to practice two-way rather than one-way communication, the mean scores are slightly different. Female practitioners have higher mean scores rather than male practitioners (see Figure 3). This finding means that female practitioners hold a better capability to perform two-way communication than males. Thus, this research establishes the second proposition. It also confirms other studies that females substantively manage more effectively than males (Erzikova and Berger, 2016).

Further, this current research also verifies the literature that female characters, which are flexible, sociable, warm, friendly, and better in persuasion (Siregar, 2011), have become significant factors in supporting effective communication strategies in managerial roles. These female's characters are needed by all public relations practitioners to make it look appealing for their public (Juliano, 2015), even though the characters appear to have a contrasting meaning in other contexts, such as female must be warm and friendly leads to a reason that female is not necessary to have to be intelligent or rational (Rajaratnam and Rycker, 2018). The research also confirms Kirat's (2018) findings in Qatar that most female
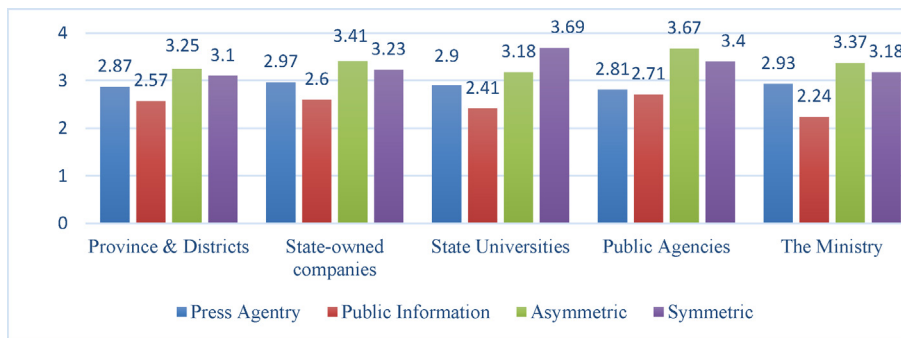

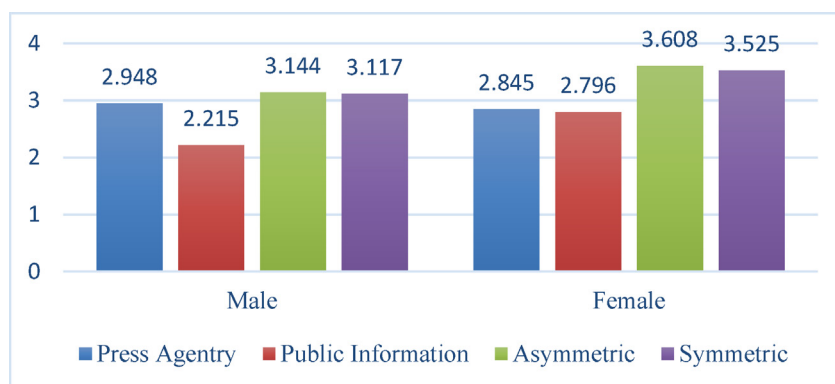**Figure 2.** Communication model based on institution types.

Figure 3. Communication model of male and female GPR practitioners.

practitioners perceived some roles of two-way communication model as extremely important, since the model is suitable in responding to public complaints and investigating complaints and public statements, and carrying out research and studies.

However, a small number of the female head of public relations divisions appears to place their position to the predominant culture and politic of the Indonesian government, which tends to posit male as a leader rather than the female, although according to Astuti (2016) the number of employees is more females and the number of female legislators must be at least 30%. The finding also contributes to the previous studies from other scholars that female practitioners mostly fill the jobs of public relations (Grunig et al., 2013; Kriyantono and Rakhmawati, 2020; Simorangkir, 2013), whereas male practitioners are considered more dominant in the position as manager (Erzikova and Berger, 2016). It links to other study that an increase in the number of women working, but women managers are underrepresented in management in hospitality and tourism (Nagar, 2021).

The situation shows gender inequality and a lack of participation as a part of the dominant coalition in government agencies. Regarding a democracy, it shows that there is no democracy if all policies are made by the male (Ashaf and Kartika, 2019). However, in the future, the situation will get better. According to the Central Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Indonesia, male managers still dominate, but the number of female managers has increased compared to male managers, 24.17% (2016) to 26.63% (2017), and 28.97% (2018) (Pusparisa, 2019). Indonesia has also been able to narrow the gender gap by 8% over the past 12 years (Wulandari, 2020).

4.3. Experience as a competency

The research reveals that most practitioners have been working for less than five years. It is described that more females (20%) than male practitioners (13%) who have been working as GPR practitioners for more than ten years (Figure 4). This finding is interesting since according to Wilcox et al. (2011) there are more males than females who worked as public relations practitioners in the US in almost middle-aged persons. It is also happening in Britain since females do not prefer to put public relations as long-term careers (Yaxley, 2013).

The small number of women becoming managers is probably due to the constraints experienced by women, who do not only perform domestic roles, but also work roles in the office. Although in the last decade, the public roles have increased, fertility rates are declining and age at first marriage is increasingly (Utomo, 2015), the role of childbirth and caring for children is still the main role of women. The government usually gives permission for maternity leave and baby care for up to four months. Women also took leave several times because they gave birth several times. This is also due to the philosophy of society that "many children have a lot of sustenance", which is also driven by the low social security for elderly people so that parents usually rely heavily on being cared for by their children in old age.

The authors also find out that a longer period of working causes the mean scores for asymmetrical communication and symmetrical communication strategies to increase (Figure 5). This finding further confirms that work experience is a significant variable that influences accommodative attitudes to the public. Experience will determine interpersonal competencies and management of interactions (Sambo, 2019). For example, Sallot and Johnson (2006) reveal that journalists consider that public relations practitioners with journalism experiences better understood the media's needs and effectively served the media. However, compared to the data above that male practitioners are more dominant as a manager, a good career for female practitioners does not directly relate to the highest level position in the GPR division.

Figure 6 illustrates the communication model based on the category of working experience for female practitioners, that the longer the working period, the better the symmetric two-way quality. The mean scores rise consistently from the shortest working period (less than five years) to the longest working period (more than ten years), from 3.278 to 3.714 to 3.832 (Asymmetric model) and from 3.32 to 3.535 to 3.721 (Symmetric model). Meanwhile, the best performance of male practitioners occurs on the practitioners with a working period of 5–10 years (Figure 7).

4.4. Educational backgrounds as a competency

This research reveals the importance of educational backgrounds for supporting public relations activities (Figure 8). GPR practitioners with non-communication educational backgrounds dominate public relations positions in government organizations (57%), in contrast, the practitioners with communication educational background are only 21%. If the percentage of practitioners who are unwilling to mention their
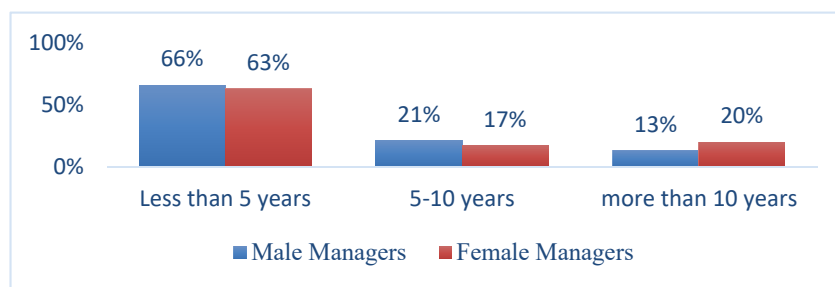

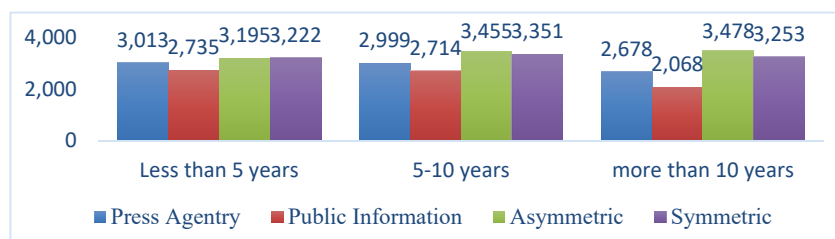
Figure 4. Gender and working experience.

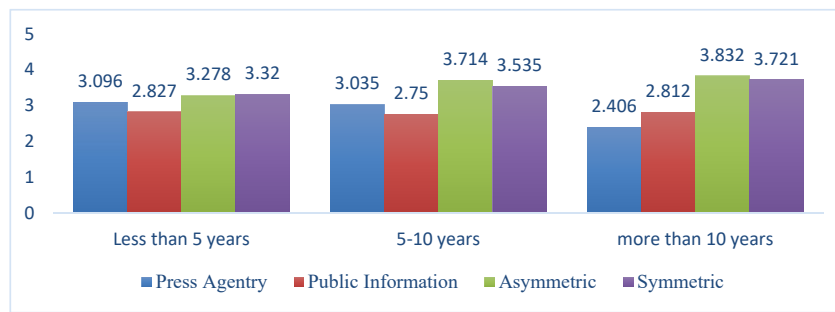**Figure 5.** Communication models and the work experience.

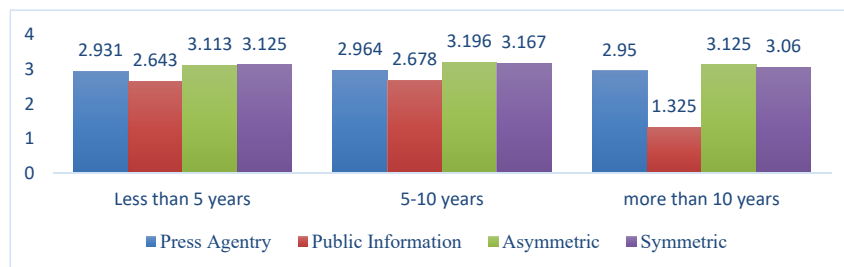**Figure 6.** Communication models and the working experience (female practitioners).

Figure 7. Communication models and the working experience (male practitioners).
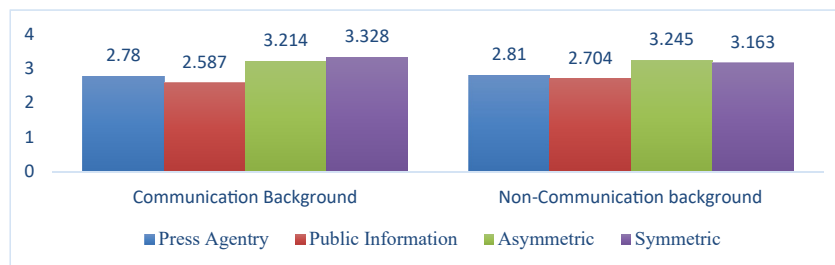

Figure 8. Communication models and educational backgrounds.

educational background (22%) is combined with the percentage of those who mention it, the percentage is still below 57%. The finding confirms that public relations is multidisciplined applied communication science (Greenwood, 2010; Kriyantono and Anggraini, 2020; Mundy, 2016; Sisco et al., 2011); therefore, it opens opportunities for graduates of all disciplines to take part as public relations practitioners. This situation also leads to encroachment, in which the public relations division was held by non-public relations practitioners (Papilaya et al., 2018).

However, the finding confirms that educational backgrounds affect the types of communication models used. Practitioners who held a degree in communication studies are likely to practice a two-way symmetrical model. In contrast, the practitioners who have non-communication educational backgrounds tend to practice the two-way asymmetrical model. Like other communication practice areas, everyone has an open opportunity to have a career in it. Yet, this research has convinced that graduates of communication study programs have basic theoretical knowledge that has become a valuable capital undergoing effective practice. The significance of mastering theory in public relations practices is also reflected in Wehmeier's (2009) research on practitioners and academics from the US, Germany, Singapore, Australia, and New Zealand. Wehmeier reveals that most respondents acknowledged that they strongly desired that the practice of public relations be based on academic theories. The theories are expected to offer a more certain concept

so that the practice has a good quality, and theories are expected to offer rational solutions to practical problems.

4.5. The effectiveness of GPR activities

Finally, it can be seen that level of effectiveness of GPR activities confirms the above findings that female respondents conduct better achievement in either asymmetrical or symmetrical communication models (see Figure 3). The level of effectiveness of the models is very effective. Although female respondents also admit implementing one-way communication strategies (press-agentry and public information), the effectiveness levels are not low, but effective. On the other hand, the overall GPR activities of male respondents are effective enough. The statistics provide evidence that female practitioners should be given broader opportunities to express their managerial roles in GPR divisions (Table 3).

The equal opportunity between male and female is possible to support the function of GPR further to become a bridge of interaction between government, citizens, legislators, and the judiciary. Adopting Lee (2012), the government differs from a business organization. The government should be more responsive since it communicates with all citizens rather than with customers and clients. Everybody is a citizen; then, citizens have a claim on public service although a government agency is not

Table 3. Effectiveness level of GPR.

Male Practitioners

Model	MS	MiS	SD	MI	TS (x)	EF	Level of effectiveness
Press Agentry	1525	305	200	915	849	$(915 + 400) \leq x \leq (915 + 600)$ $= 1315 \leq x \leq 1515$	very effective
						$(915 + 200) \leq x \leq (915 + 400)$ $= 1115 \leq x \leq 1315$	effective
						$(915–200) \leq x \leq (915 + 200)$ $= 715 \leq x \leq 1115$	**effective enough**
						$(915–400) \leq x \leq (915–200)$ $= 514 \leq x \leq 715$	ineffective
						$(915–600) \leq x \leq (915–400)$ $= 314 \leq x \leq 514$	very ineffective
Public Information	915	183	122	549	458	$(549 + 244) \leq x \leq (549 + 366)$ $= 793 \leq x \leq 915$	very effective
						$(549 + 122) \leq x \leq (549 + 244)$ $= 671 \leq x \leq 739$	effective
						$(549–122) \leq x \leq (549 + 122)$ $= 427 \leq x \leq 671$	**effective enough**
						$(549–244) \leq x \leq (549–122)$ $= 305 \leq x \leq 427$	ineffective
						$(549–366) \leq x \leq (549–244)$ $= 183 \leq x \leq 305$	very ineffective
Asymmetrical	1220	244	162	732	739	$(732 + 325) \leq x \leq (732 + 487)$ $= 1057 \leq x \leq 1219$	very effective
						$(732 + 162) \leq x \leq (732 + 325)$ $= 895 \leq x \leq 1057$	effective
						$(732–162) \leq x \leq (732 + 162)$ $= 569 \leq x \leq 895$	**effective enough**
						$(732–325) \leq x \leq (732–162)$ $= 406 \leq x \leq 569$	ineffective
						$(732–487) \leq x \leq (732–325)$ $= 244 \leq x \leq 406$	very ineffective
Symmetrical	1220	244	162	732	730	$(732 + 325) \leq x \leq (732 + 487)$ $= 1057 \leq x \leq 1219$	very effective
						$(732 + 162) \leq x \leq (732 + 325)$ $= 895 \leq x \leq 1057$	effective
						$(732–162) \leq x \leq (732 + 162)$ $= 569 \leq x \leq 895$	**effective enough**
						$(732–325) \leq x \leq (732–162)$ $= 406 \leq x \leq 569$	ineffective
						$(732–487) \leq x \leq (732–325)$ $= 244 \leq x \leq 406$	very ineffective

Female Practitioners

Model	MS	MiS	SD	MI	TS (x)	EF	Level of effectiveness
Press-Agentry	1025	205	136	615	838	$(615 + 273) \leq x \leq (615 + 409)$ $= 888 \leq x \leq 1024$	very effective
						$(915 + 136) \leq x \leq (915 + 273)$ $= 752 \leq x \leq 888$	**effective**
						$(915–136) \leq x \leq (915 + 136)$ $= 478 \leq x \leq 752$	effective enough
						$(915–273) \leq x \leq (915–136)$ $= 341 \leq x \leq 478$	ineffective
						$(915–409) \leq x \leq (915–273)$ $= 205 \leq x \leq 341$	very ineffective
Public Information	615	123	82	369	468	$(369 + 164) \leq x \leq (369 + 246)$ $= 533 \leq x \leq 615$	very effective
						$(369 + 82) \leq x \leq (369 + 164)$ $= 451 \leq x \leq 533$	**effective**
						$(369–82) \leq x \leq (369 + 82)$ $= 287 \leq x \leq 451$	effective enough
						$(369–164) \leq x \leq (369–82)$ $= 205 \leq x \leq 287$	ineffective
						$(549–246) \leq x \leq (549–164)$ $= 123 \leq x \leq 205$	very ineffective

Table 3 (continued)

Male Practitioners

Model	MS	MiS	SD	MI	TS (x)	EF	Level of effectiveness
Asymmetrical	820	164	109	492	749	**(492 + 218) ≤ x ≤ (492 + 327)** **= 710 ≤ x ≤ 819**	**very effective**
						(492 + 109) ≤ x ≤ (492 + 218) = 601 ≤ x ≤ 710	effective
						(492–109) ≤ x ≤ (492 + 109) = 383 ≤ x ≤ 601	effective enough
						(492–218) ≤ x ≤ (492–109) = 273 ≤ x ≤ 383	ineffective
						(492–327) ≤ x ≤ (492–218) = 164 ≤ x ≤ 273	very ineffective
Symmetrical	820	164	109	492	734	**(492 + 218) ≤ x ≤ (492 + 327)** **= 710 ≤ x ≤ 819**	**very effective**
						(492 + 109) ≤ x ≤ (492 + 218) = 601 ≤ x ≤ 710	effective
						(492–109) ≤ x ≤ (492 + 109) = 383 ≤ x ≤ 601	effective enough
						(492–218) ≤ x ≤ (492–109) = 273 ≤ x ≤ 383	ineffective
						(492–327) ≤ x ≤ (492–218) = 164 ≤ x ≤ 273	very ineffective

MS = Maximum Score; MiS = Minimum Score; MI = Mean Ideal; SD = Standard Deviation; TS = Total Score; EF = Effectiveness Formula.

serving them. GPR is crucial for the success of democracy, and government communication requires the ability of government communicators (Berry, 2013).

5. Conclusion and recommendations

In general, the research is paying particular attention to engagement with gender issues in public relations and contributing to expand public relations theory by affirming that the four models have been applied in different social contexts with different results. This research has challenged the patriarchal culture in public relations where female practitioners, if given the opportunity to occupy managerial positions, have better managerial abilities than male practitioners.

The Indonesian government has developed communication infrastructure well, including communication technology and internet connectivity. Better opportunities to access the internet improve the government's opportunities to communicate with citizens. At this point, the government has followed up by implementing a two-way communication models in the public relations divisions. It has a good outcome on communication between the government and citizens, which means that achievement also contributes to the development of democracy in Indonesia.

Unfortunately, the achievement in the outcome is not linear with achievement in gender issues. The implementation of the two-way communication models in Indonesia still has problems with gender inequality. In several public relations divisions, male practitioners still dominate managerial positions. Although either female or male practitioners are more likely to practice the two-way rather than one-way communication, the mean scores are slightly different. That female practitioners have higher mean scores rather than male practitioners mean female practitioners hold a better capability to perform two-way communication than males.

This finding does not ignore the competency variables but rather confirms that the practitioner's competency is matters. Practitioners who held a degree in communication studies are likely to practice a two-way symmetrical model, while the practitioners who have non-communication educational backgrounds tend to practice the two-way asymmetrical model. It concludes that female practitioners who have a degree in communication studies hold a better capability to perform two-way communication than males who have a degree in communication studies.

The research has limitations in generalizing data since it involves only 102 respondents so that the results cannot be extrapolated to the national context. It should be noted that the respondents do not represent all GPR in Indonesia during the period of data collecting since they are chosen in the study based on accessibility consideration. Hence, the authors recommend conducting a national survey in order to capture GPR Practices more comprehensively and to achieve a better level of data generalization. The authors also recommend doing a qualitative research to present thick descriptions regarding the practitioners' feelings, motives, opinions, and also explore cultural, economic, power-relations, and social backgrounds since the findings presented here do not go in-depth to investigate these findings' economic, political, and socio-cultural influences. It is noted that the limitation of quantitative excellence research is challenging to capture the broader environment that affects the GPR practices since it merely focuses on GPR perspectives.

Many areas are still needed to be discovered in the future since the study of public relations in Indonesia is in its early stage. For further research, it is expected to expand public relations study in the Indonesian context by comparing the communication models applied by public relations practitioners between the private and government sectors because the two organizations are similarly required to strengthen their positive reputations in the democratic and transparency era. Furthermore, this study depicts some characteristics of GPR practitioners in Indonesia, including their educational backgrounds. Finally, the roots of these characteristics could be further investigated in future research to give more broadly contribute to the field of public relations.

Declarations

Author contribution statement

George Towar Ikbal Tawakkal: Conceived and designed the experiments; Analyzed and interpreted the data.

Reza Safitri: Analyzed and interpreted the data; Wrote the paper.

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