

Advocacy of violence against women through the implementation of cyber public relations at the Rifka Annisa women's Crisis Center

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the implementation of Cyber Public Relations at the Rifka Annisa Women's Crisis Center (Rifka Annisa WCC) in advocating public awareness of violence against women. This study aims to identify the obstacles Rifka Annisa WCC faces in managing Cyber Public Relations activities, analyze how they address those obstacles, and examine the impact of Cyber Public Relations implementation on advocacy of violence against women. This research employs a qualitative case study method through observation and in-depth interviews with Rifka Annisa WCC's media officer. The study objectives are presented using the concepts of Cyber Public Relations and Social Media. The study results found that the lack of human resources in managing social media hindered Rifka Annisa WCC in optimizing Cyber Public Relations activities to advocates public awareness. To address this obstacle, Rifka Annisa WCC focuses on using Instagram as an online advocacy tool. Furthermore, the application of Cyber Public Relations in Rifka Annisa WCC's advocacy activities had a significant impact on aspects of community literacy regarding the discourse on violence against women, as well as changes in the behavior of victims of violence and the larger community in responding to violence against women.

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1. Introduction

Violence against women has become a long-standing social problem (Nilan et al., 2014). In Indonesia, cases of violence against women thrive and continue to increase every year. According to the National Commission on Violence Against Women, cases of violence against women increased by 792% in 12 years, implying that in real life, women in Indonesia face insecurity as a result of gender-based violence (Maulida Balqis, 2022). Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) are grassroots actors that play a significant role in overcoming violence against women. NGOs are directly involved in empowering women by providing medical and psychological assistance, shelter, counseling, legal assistance to victims of violence, and advocacy to the community (Noer et al., 2021).

Rifka Annisa Women's Crisis Center (Rifka Annisa WCC) is a non-governmental organization (NGO) that specializes in dealing with violence against women (Sup, 2021). Since its inception in Yogyakarta 28 years ago, Rifka Annisa WCC has focused on assisting women victims of violence and raising public awareness of gender-based violence through proactive, educational, and

technologically responsive work programs. This institution intensively accommodates the needs of victims of violence through psychological counseling and legal assistance programs; proactively advocates government policies to protect women; and educates the public through workshops, training, interactive websites, and social media campaigns (Prayoga et al., 2015). Rifka Annisa WCC maps the segmentation of the audience she wants to reach while carrying out her work program, which includes adults, teenagers, students, and housewives (Andryani et al., 2022). However, violence against women is not a problem that can be solved overnight (Fabianti & Putra, 2021). Violence against women is rooted in the manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women, leading to men's dominance and discrimination against women and continuing to hold back women's development (Abdul Syukur & Bagshaw, 2020). One of the obstacles in dealing with this social problem is that most victims of violence do not know how to seek help or report their situation. In addition, many victims of violence often think that acts of violence and abuse in their household are a disgrace that should not be revealed (Andina, 2020).

Given the complexities of its socio-cultural roots, the discourse on violence against women requires continuous efforts through public awareness and advocacy (Newman, 2022). Rifka Annisa WCC implements Cyber Public Relations management to reach victims of violence and the larger community in their efforts to deal with the problem of violence against women continuously (Bangkalang et al., 2021). The concept of Cyber Public Relations itself is a new perspective in public relations activities to adapt to advancements in information technology in the digital era, which gave birth to the growth of cyber media with a diverse range of social media platforms (Sulianta et al., 2019). Simultaneously, the advancement of information technology is followed by increasing public needs to communicate and obtain information (Heikinheimo et al., 2017). This condition encourages institutions to be adaptable to the management of Cyber Public Relations, utilizing the functions and advantages of social media platforms to reach a wider audience when communicating institutional messages to the public, building public trust, and managing crises to achieve institutional goals (Susanto et al., 2019). Rifka Annisa WCC applies the concept of Cyber Public Relations by managing four social media platforms: the official website, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. This study aims to examine the application of cyber public relations at the Rifka Annisa WCC in advocating public awareness of violence against women (Yuliawati & Irawan, 2016). Specifically, this study identifies the obstacles faced by Rifka Annisa WCC in managing cyber public relations, analyzes Rifka Annisa WCC's steps toward overcoming the obstacles, and analyzes the impact of Rifka Annisa WCC's cyber public relations implementation on advocacy regarding violence against women.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Cyber Public Relations

Cyber Public Relations is a public relations activity conducted through internet-based electronic media that aims to build a brand, trust, understanding, and image of the company or organization among the public, where this activity can be conducted in one-to-one interactive communication (Sanina et al., 2017).

Henry Fayol in Ali et al., (2021) states three aspects of Public Relations activities: (1) Building corporate identity through two-way communication activities with various parties; (2) Managing crises through crisis management (Yeh, 2021); (3) Promoting social aspects that are related to public interests and supporting social campaign activities (Ramakrishna, 2019). The implementation of Cyber Public Relations does not change the aspects of how public relations work in principle, but only adjusts them in substance due to the public's dynamism for increased information and communication needs (Ray, 2018). In practice, public relations can use the cybermedia space to revolutionize its work, making it more strategic, global, interactive, two-way, symmetrical, or dialogical, and its implementation can be socially accountable (Yuliawati & Irawan, 2016).

2.2. Social Media

Social media are digital platforms, services, and applications that combine content sharing, public communication, and interpersonal connections (Trunfio & Lucia, 2019). More specifically, social media is a web-based service that enables users to create, modify, share, and interact with

easily accessible user-generated content. This allows people to connect, interact, collaborate, and build communities (Dedeoğlu et al., 2020).

Chris Heuer in Noonan (2018) the founder of Social Media Club and a social media innovator, put forward the 4C concept of managing and working social media as follows: (1) Context; refers to aspects of how we form a message or story (information) (Moran & Muzellec, 2017), such as language use and message content; (2) Communication; refers to a method of sharing information, in this case by including images or wrapping the messages in a way that users can feel, which can make them feel comfortable about messages conveyed to other users; (3) Collaboration; refers to the partnership aspect of social media accounts, users (Utami, 2022), or other institutions by using social networks to improve situations and make them more efficient and effective (Fischhoff, 2019); (4) Connection; refers to keeping up relationships that have been built or nurtured, which can help social media users feel closer or more connected (Wu et al., 2022).

Due to the high demand for information and communication among the public, social media usage is growing daily. Social media is very effective for carrying out public relations activities within a company or organization because it can convey information quickly. Social media is one of the channels through which institutions or companies can connect with the public (Susanto et al., 2019).

3. Method

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach to examine the case of public relations in advocating public awareness of the discourse on violence against women (Fabianti & Putra, 2021). This case study method is used to emphasize the specifications of the units or cases studied in the research problem (Purwaningtyas et al., 2021). This study was conducted in Yogyakarta, with the Rifka Annisa Women's Crisis Center (Rifka Annisa WCC) as the research object and Mrs. Nurmawati, the expert staff of the Rifka Annisa WCC's media officer, as the research subject/source person. The primary reason for selecting the informant for this study was her direct involvement in Rifka Annisa WCC's social media activities, which are used for information dissemination and education related to the discourse on violence against women (Poluan & Lung, 2022). The data collection techniques used are in-depth interviews to obtain primary data and observation to obtain secondary data. In-depth interviews with media officer Rifka Annisa WCC were conducted to gather information such as the sources' opinions, motivations, values, or experiences. Observations were made on Rifka Annisa WCC's social media account to see the institution's activities in carrying out online advocacy regarding the discourse of violence against women (Prasetyo et al., 2020). Furthermore, this study employs an interactive model data analysis technique, which consists of three components: (1) Data condensation (data reduction); at this stage, the researcher organizes primary and secondary data into groups that are relevant to the research objectives, and discards irrelevant data (Muditomo & Wahyudi, 2020); (2) Data display; refers to a well-organized and dense collection of information that allows the researcher to reach convincing conclusions (Miles & Scott, 2019). At this stage, the researcher presents the data in the form of narrative text and descriptive explanations; (3) Conclusion drawing and verification; at this stage, The researcher analyzes the finding data to address the research objectives, double-checks the analysis's compatibility with the findings, and concludes the research findings (Paramitha, 2020).

4. Results and Discussion

Rifka Annisa Women's Crisis Center (Rifka Annisa WCC) dedicates their work to eliminating violence against women and creating a gender-equitable society by empowering victims of violence and increasing community awareness and participation through critical education and network strengthening (<https://www.rifka-annisa.org>). This institution has two major work programs: 1) handling victims of violence through psychological counseling and legal assistance provided at the Rifka Annisa WCC office and home visits; 2) advocating public awareness about violence against women discourse through community training programs at the student, university and community levels. In terms of advocacy, Rifka Annisa WCC has four social media platforms: their official website, Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, which are managed by Rifka Annisa WCC's Public

Relations and Media division as a supporting tool to reach a larger audience in carrying out advocacy on public awareness of discourse on violence against women (Andryani et al., 2022).

Rifka Annisa WCC's social media management represents the institution's use of cyberpublic relations. Rifka Annisa WCC maintains an official website to provide information about its history, profile, services, activities, and contacts. The information on their website is advantageous for educating the public about the Rifka Annisa WCC's existence and the services they provide in dealing with the violence against women discourse.



Fig. 1. Rifka Annisa WCC Website Display

Rifka Annisa WCC conducts community advocacy activities through social media platforms by focusing on the compatibility between content sharing and the characteristics of social media users, as the informant states;

“So we intentionally use these social media platforms for education and advocacy with the goal of changing people's perspectives and behaviors in this discourse on violence against women. Because each social media platform has a different target audience, we tailor our social media content for each of them. For example, we use Facebook and Twitter to reach out to adult audiences aged 40 and older. Meanwhile, we use Instagram to reach out to young people and adults under the age of 40. We adjust the content display based on this audience segmentation.” (Interview, 2022).

However, Rifka Annisa WCC struggled to manage her social media platforms then the COVID-19 pandemic struck in 2020. Because of the pandemic, they had to reduce their institutional staff, making it difficult for Rifka Annisa WCC's Public Relations and Media Division to create social media content for their advocacy efforts. On the other hand, online advocacy became critical during the pandemic, when cases of violence against women increased and Rifka Annisa WCC's face-to-face educational activities were halted due to the pandemic's social distancing policy. The informant explains,

“We have a sizeable social media team here at Rifka Annisa. We have a media officer who leads a team of several people who manage Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and the website. We also have a creative team dedicated to creating public service advertisement videos. But then in 2020-2021, due to the impact of the pandemic, we had to reduce staff. At the time, it was drastic at Rifka Annisa; we had difficulty producing content for advocacy because the media team had been drastically reduced. On the other hand, Rifka Annisa had to be more active in advocacy during the pandemic due to increased public stress and domestic violence, so we had to be more aggressive in informing our clients and the public. We face a lot of confusion and difficulty in this situation, but we still have to try to raise public awareness of this issue, so whatever we can do at the time, we keep trying to make it work.” (Interview, 2022).

Rifka Annisa WCC then focused on Instagram content management to overcome those obstacles. This action reflects a strategic step to overcome existing obstacles, as people currently tend to prefer the Instagram platform for finding information, especially young people who prefer easily digestible information presented in the form of pictures or animations (Hruska & Maresova, 2020; Huang & Su, 2018). The Instagram platform has intriguing features that meet people's needs for finding

information. Another consideration for Rifka Annisa WCC focusing on Instagram content management is that followers on Rifka Annisa WCC's Instagram account are more diverse than followers on other Rifka Annisa WCC social media accounts, so Rifka Annisa WCC can use more diverse followers to network in order to broaden advocacy for public awareness of violence against women, as explained by the informant:

“ Before the pandemic, we differentiated the design for each of our social media content. We started focusing on optimizing Rifka Annisa's Instagram account because we do not have enough staff to produce advocacy content on social media.. We continue to manage our other social media accounts, but we use the same content design as as what we display on our Instagram account. Instagram has many interesting features that are popular among both young people and adults, such as Reels and Live Instagram. Rifka Annisa's Instagram followers are also more diverse, including child protection services, education services, social services, Jogja public relations practitioners, and public influencers. It provides a great opportunity for Rifka to network in order to educate the public.” (Interview, 2022).

Furthermore, Rifka Annisa WCC presents their Instagram content with image designs and diction that fit the public communication trend in order to attract the public's attention, especially young people, in order for them to learn more about the educational messages conveyed through Rifka Annisa WCC's Instagram content. The following are some examples of Rifka Annisa WCC's Instagram content design:



Fig. 2. Example of Rifka Annisa WCC's Instagram Feed



Fig. 3. Example of Rifka Annisa WCC's Live Instagram

Rifka Annisa WCC's efforts to continue using social media platforms to advocate public awareness of violence against women have had a significant positive impact on aspects of literacy and changes in people's perspectives and behaviors toward this discourse, as explained by the informant:

"We once conducted a small study to measure the effectiveness of Rifka's social media, and the results showed that our social media advocacy had a positive impact. In terms of public awareness, those who are unaware become aware of the issue. For example, they who previously do not know that what they are experiencing was violence, they come to understand "oh if I am treated like this it means I am getting sexual harassment, it means I am a victim", or "when I am being treated with my partner like that means I'm a victim of domestic violence, oh that means I can report it", these public awareness grows as a result of the information we provide through social media. There have also been noticeable improvements in public attitudes toward the issue. For example, a person who has a friend who has become a violence victim no longer blames the victim, but instead informs the victim about Rifka Annisa's services, so that his/her friend (the victim) comes to our office to use Rifka's services. In terms of public behavior, for example, many victims previously did not dare to report or were unsure where to go for help, but after reading information on Rifka's social media, the victims gained the strength and courage to seek help. Other changes in public behavior, for example, include individuals who had previously committed violence against their partner or children now attempting not to commit violence in their family after learning about the psychological impact of violence through Rifka Annisa's social media content. According to our findings, Rifka Annisa's goals of educating and changing public attitudes and behaviors have been met, albeit not completely. It is difficult to achieve 100% success because violence against women is a complex discourse that necessitates continuous efforts." (Interview, 2022).

The accomplishments described above demonstrate Rifka Annisa WCC's success in implementing the concept of Cyber Public Relations in carrying out their major work program, namely handling the victim of violence and advocating public awareness of the discourse on violence against women. Rifka Annisa WCC applies the concept of Cyber Public Relations by managing social media content in which they present educational information that is packed according to public trends in communicating and seeking information in order to attract the public's attention and encourage them to continue consuming the information provided by Rifka Annisa WCC on their social media platforms. This continuous public advocacy effort through social media has resulted in significant accomplishments for Rifka Annisa WCC's work program, such as an increase in public literacy related to the discourse on violence against women, changes in the attitudes of victims of violence and the public toward the discourse on violence against women, and changes in the public's behavior in responding to the discourse on violence against women.

5. Conclusion

The discourse of violence against women has complex socio-cultural roots that must be addressed on a continuous basis through public awareness advocacy. Women's Crisis Center Rifka Annisa (Rifka Annisa WCC) applies the concept of Cyber Public Relations as a means to reach victims of violence and the larger community in their efforts to deal with the problem of violence against women continuously. This institution incorporates the concept of Cyber Public Relations into its work programs by managing social media platforms such as official website, Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram with a focus on content-sharing compatibility and social media user characteristics.

The lack of human resources in managing social media platforms as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 hindered Rifka Annisa WCC in optimizing Cyber Public Relations activities in advocating public awareness. To overcome these obstacles, this institution focused on using Instagram as an online advocacy tool. Educational information about violence against women is conveyed using the features available on the Instagram platform and is presented in content designs and dictions that adhere to current public communication trends. The implementation of Cyber Public Relations in Rifka Annisa WCC's advocacy activities had a significant impact, especially on increasing public literacy about the discourse on violence against women and changing the attitudes and behavior of victims of violence and society in responding to this discourse.

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