

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY OF THE INDONESIAN RED CROSS ORGANIZATION IN MEDAN CITY IN INCREASING PUBLIC BLOOD DONOR PARTICIPATION

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Abstrack

The need for blood in Medan City continues to increase every year, but has not been matched by the level of community participation in voluntary blood donation. This research aims to analyze the communication strategies applied by the Indonesian Red Cross (PMI) Medan City in increasing public awareness and participation in blood donation. This research used a qualitative method with a descriptive approach, which involved in-depth interviews with five informants, consisting of PMI internal parties and the general public. The results showed that PMI Medan City implemented various communication strategies, including persuasive and humanist communication, utilization of social media and conventional media, and the AIDDA model approach (Awareness, Interest, Desire, Decision, Action). In addition, PMI actively collaborates with various parties and emphasizes friendly service to build public trust. Obstacles faced include a lack of public understanding, negative perceptions, and fear of the blood donation process. Effective, educative, and targeted communication strategies are proven to increase public participation and shape PMI's positive image as a humanitarian organization. The findings recommend the importance of innovation and continuous evaluation in communication strategies to address challenges in the field and strengthen the culture of voluntary blood donation.

Keywords: Communication Strategy, Blood Donation, PMI, Community Participation

Introduction

The Indonesian Red Cross (PMI) is a national association organization in Indonesia that was formed to carry out voluntary tasks in the humanitarian field (Ayuni, 2025). PMI always adheres to the seven basic principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, namely humanity, equality, voluntariness, independence, unity, neutrality and universality. And until now PMI has been in 33 PMI Regions (provincial level and around 408 PMI Branches (city/district level) throughout Indonesia (Usiono et al., 2023).

Based on data from the World Health Organization (WHO), it shows that there is significant variation in the availability of blood for transfusion in various regions. In 2018, WHO recorded the highest blood collection in Europe, with a total donation of 30.7 million (24.8 million from whole blood donors and 5.9 million from apheresis donors). The Western Pacific region with a total donation of 26.3 million (23.2 million whole blood and 3.1 million apheresis), while the Americas recorded 24.1 million (21.6 million whole blood and 2.5 million apheresis). On the other hand, the Southeast

Asia region recorded a total donation of 22.3 million (21.6 million whole blood and 0.7 million apheresis) (WHO, 2023).

Data from the Ministry of Health (Ministry of Health) and PMI noted that blood stock in Indonesia as of June 2021 reached 3.14 million blood bags. Although the number has continued to increase over the past ten years, this number is still less than the minimum national blood requirement (Sutrisna et al., 2023).

The Medan City PMI UTD admitted that the need for blood stock in the city was 5,500-6,000 bags per day, while the blood stock available during the Covid-19 pandemic was only 4,000 bags per day (Siagian et al., 2024).

As a humanitarian organization engaged in health, disaster response and community services, the most important task that must be done is to take care of the provision of blood, but the problem is that the number of patients who need blood is very large. This is not followed by public awareness who voluntarily donate their blood. The need for blood continues to increase from year to year, people who want to need blood usually do so because there is an urgent need and it concerns someone's life or death (Aini Annisya, 2023).

This research was conducted at the PMI Medan City, Jl. Perintis Kemerdekaan No.37. The research subjects were informants who had a deep understanding of the situation to be studied. In the initial survey conducted by the researcher, it was found that there was still a lack of public awareness of the importance of blood donation and public awareness of this participation because many people still expect benefits or rewards such as basic necessities and other needs so that they are interested in donating blood. The high need for blood in Medan City has not been fully met by the number of volunteer donors available. The Blood Transfusion Unit (UTD) of the Medan City PMI reported a daily need of 5,500-6,000 blood bags, but during the pandemic it was only able to provide around 4,000 bags per day, and until now, the public participation rate has not fully recovered. In fact, as a humanitarian organization, PMI not only functions as a blood provider, but also as a driver of education and public awareness through various communication strategies.

The communication strategy implemented by PMI Medan City in increasing blood donor participation can be analyzed through several communication theories. First, Harold D. Lasswell's (1948) communication theory, which is famous for the formula "Who says what in which channel to whom with what effect?" provides a framework for understanding PMI's communication process—from who delivers the message (PMI), message content (blood donors), communication channels (social media, direct socialization), message recipients (community), to the desired effect (donor participation). This theory is reinforced by the communication strategy approach from Onong Uchjana Effendy (2003), which states that communication strategy is a combination of communication planning and management that includes strategy formulation, implementation, and evaluation. In addition, PMI also applies the AIDDA model (Strong, 1925) which consists of five stages, namely Awareness, Interest, Desire, Decision, and Action to systematically direct changes in community attitudes and behavior. No less important, the persuasive communication approach (Larson, 2012) is used by PMI by emphasizing the educational and humanistic side, so that the blood donor message is received emotionally and rationally. These four theories underlie PMI's communication strategy which is holistic, targeted, and able to overcome barriers to donor participation in society.

PMI Medan city makes efforts by interacting with the wider community. Interaction involving the community is carried out through activities, socialization, and reports. Increasing interaction is done through social media or direct activities. Based on the background above, this study aims to increase understanding of how PMI utilizes social media platforms to communicate humanitarian issues and how this affects their perception and brand image in the eyes of the public. Therefore, it is hoped that this study will provide a useful contribution to PMI in increasing the effectiveness of their

communication and strengthening support for their humanitarian efforts through social media (Andika & Sazali, 2024).

Research Method

This study uses a qualitative method with a descriptive research design. Qualitative research is descriptive and analytical. In qualitative research, "descriptive" means describing and explaining events, phenomena, and social situations being studied. While "analysis" means understanding, interpreting, and comparing data obtained from research. Qualitative research is a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words about people and their behavior. Qualitative research can also be defined as a strategy for finding meaning, understanding, concepts, characteristics, symptoms, symbols, or descriptions of a phenomenon, focused or multi-method, prioritizing quality, using various methods, and presenting the results holistically and naturally.

Results

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics

Informant	Gender	Education	Position
Core Informant (1)	Man	S1 Ilmu Komputer	Head of General Secretariat and K3 Section
Key Informants (2)	Man	S1 Hukum	Personnel Manager
Key Informants (3)	Man	S1 Ilmu Komputer	Public Relations
Supporting informants (4)	Man	SMA	Public
Supporting informants (5)	Man	SMA	Public

Based on the table above, this study consists of 5 informants, 1 key informant who is the Head of the General Secretariat and K3 Section at PMI Medan City, male with a Bachelor's degree, while the main informant is 2 people, 1 who is the Personnel Manager at PMI Medan City, male with a Bachelor's degree, 2 are the Public Relations section at PMI Medan City, male with a Bachelor's degree and 2 supporting informants, namely male members of the public with a high school education.

Based on the results of interviews related to the communication and socialization strategies implemented by the Indonesian Red Cross (PMI) Medan City in increasing blood donor participation in the community, the researcher draws conclusions from the informant's answers that:

- a. **Persuasive and Humanistic Communication Approach**
Based on the interview results, PMI Medan City applies persuasive communication that emphasizes a humanistic and educational approach to the community. PMI officers play an active role as communicators who provide clear and accurate information about the benefits of blood donation and safe and comfortable procedures, so as to reduce the fear and doubt of the community to donate their blood.
- b. **Various Media and Communication Channels**
Based on the interview results, PMI Medan City's communication strategy involves the use of various communication media, ranging from social media, radio, print media, to direct communication through socialization activities in communities and educational institutions. This aims to reach various segments of society with appropriate and easy-to-understand messages.
- c. **AIDDA Strategy Approach (Awareness, Interest, Desire, Decision, Action)**
Based on the interview results, PMI uses the AIDDA model in compiling communication messages, where the awareness stage (Awareness) is built through the dissemination of

information, then attracts attention (Interest) by highlighting the benefits of blood donation, arouses desire (Desire) through a persuasive approach by officers, encourages decisions (Decision) to participate in donation, and finally directs actions (Action) in the form of blood donation participation.

d. Collaboration with Various Parties

Based on the results of the interview, PMI Medan City actively collaborates with local governments, schools, universities, community organizations, and the private sector to expand the reach of socialization and increase community participation. This collaboration also helps in organizing well-organized and scheduled blood donation activities.

e. Emphasis on Service and Trust

In the interview, PMI officers emphasized the importance of friendly and professional service to donors, as well as transparency in blood management and test results. This aims to build community trust so that they feel safe and comfortable to participate regularly.

f. Challenges and Efforts to Overcome Them

Based on the results of the interview, the main challenge faced by PMI Medan City is the ongoing fear and misconception in the community about the risks of blood donation. Therefore, PMI continues to provide ongoing education and use a personal approach to overcome these obstacles.

Discussion

Public Response to Blood Donor Program and Awareness of Its Benefits

Based on the research results, the researcher concluded that the people of Medan City have a fairly positive level of participation in blood donation activities. The majority of people donate blood regularly every 4-5 months, for reasons of maintaining health and as a form of charity that can save other people's lives. They understand the health benefits obtained from blood donation, such as lowering cholesterol levels, stabilizing blood pressure, and improving general fitness. Several donors stated that they felt happy because this blood donation activity was not only beneficial for blood recipients, but also provided a sense of satisfaction and pride for having carried out social and humanitarian activities. Information about blood donation activities is usually obtained from social media, WhatsApp messages, and direct communication when coming to the donor location. Donors also stated that they felt comfortable and not afraid because they received a health check before donating blood so they felt safe about their condition. However, some people in Medan still show a level of indifference and negative perceptions towards blood donation activities, such as concerns about health risks and costs, which are obstacles to increasing participation rates significantly.

The results of this study are in line with research published in *El-Mujtama: Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat* (Community Service Journal) which revealed that the people of Medan City have a fairly positive level of participation in blood donation activities. The majority of people donate blood regularly every 4-5 months for reasons of maintaining health and as a form of charity that can save the lives of others. They understand the health benefits obtained from blood donation, such as lowering cholesterol levels, stabilizing blood pressure, and increasing general fitness (Fauziah, 2023). In Indonesia, the need for blood continues to increase along with population growth and medical developments.

However, the availability of sufficient blood is still a challenge, especially due to the lack of public awareness and participation in routine blood donation activities. Public ignorance of the health benefits of blood donation, both for recipients and donors, is one of the causes of the low participation rate. In addition, misperceptions about the risks of blood donation, such as fear of weakness or infection, also contribute to increasing the number of donors (Hartati et al., 2024).

Communication and Socialization Strategies Implemented by PMI in Increasing Awareness

Based on the results of the study, the researcher concluded that the Indonesian Red Cross (PMI) of Medan City adopted various communication strategies that focused on digital media and a direct approach to the community. One of the main strategies is the use of social media such as Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp to disseminate information, education, and promotion of blood donation activities regularly. In addition, PMI conducts direct socialization at community service activities in various locations such as schools, health centers, and other public places by forming counseling and education activities regarding the benefits of blood donation and the importance of volunteering in saving lives. A more innovative approach is carried out through the use of donor buses equipped with educational mini theater studies in them, so that the public can experience the donor experience while watching educational shows. This personal and educational approach has been proven to be able to increase public interest, especially the younger generation and students, to be more active in participating in blood donation activities. In addition, PMI also approaches through cooperation programs with educational institutions and companies, as well as conducting promotions through flyers and digital content that are arranged as attractively as possible to increase public awareness and motivation.

The results of the study are in line with research by Sari and Putra (2021) in the Journal of Communication Science entitled "The Role of Social Media in Increasing Blood Donor Participation in the City of Bandung" found that social media such as Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp are very effective as a means of disseminating information and education related to blood donation. Social media allows the dissemination of messages quickly, widely, and interactively, thereby increasing public awareness and interest in participating in blood donation activities (Ayuni, 2025).

Strategy is the overall conditional decision about the actions to be taken, in order to achieve goals. So formulating a strategy means taking into account the conditions and situations (space and time) faced and which will be possible in the future, in order to achieve effectiveness. The success of effective communication activities is largely determined by determining the communication strategy. On the other hand, if there is no good communication strategy, the effects of the communication process (especially mass media communication) are not impossible to have a negative impact (Annisya, 2023).

Obstacles and Challenges in Increasing Blood Donor Participation

Based on the results of the study, the researcher concluded that, although the implementation of socialization was quite intense, there were still a number of obstacles faced by PMI in Medan City. Most people are not yet fully aware of the importance of voluntary blood donation. Many people think that blood donation is only done during certain events and not routinely, and are afraid of the blood collection process and the health risks that may arise. In addition, the perception that blood donation will cost money or cause certain health problems still exists among the community. Lack of understanding of the long-term benefits and fear of pain during blood collection are major obstacles to increasing the number of donors. The availability of adequate facilities and health workers in the field is also a supporting factor in the success of blood donation activities. Field conditions during the implementation of activities in Medan are quite varied, from order and efficiency to obstacles such as the committee being underprepared and inadequate supporting facilities, so that the blood collection process is sometimes less than optimal.

The results of the study are in line with the findings of an ethnographic study of FISIP students at the University of North Sumatra (USU) which revealed that even though socialization had been carried out, community participation in blood donation was still low. This is due to negative perceptions, such as the assumption that blood donation can endanger health if done routinely, as well

as distrust of PMI due to the existence of blood management replacement costs (BPPD) which are considered a form of blood commercialization (Social, 2025).

The level of public awareness to donate blood still needs to be increased. Various factors such as lack of information, myths and concerns about blood donation, and lack of motivation, are significant obstacles. Therefore, an effective and efficient public relations strategy is very important for PMI to overcome these challenges and increase community participation in voluntary blood donation (Hidayat, 2021).

Donor Target Realization and Efforts to Increase Participation

Based on data from PMI Medan City, the monthly target reaches around 9,000 blood bags, while the current realization is around 7,000 bags, so there is a shortage of around 2,000 bags each month. This increase effort is carried out through various strategies, such as increasing promotion and socialization through social media, WhatsApp messages, and direct promotion to schools, universities, and social communities, increasing cooperation with companies and government/private agencies to hold routine and sustainable blood donation activities, implementing light incentives such as certificates or souvenirs for active donors to motivate them to continue to donate blood regularly, providing ongoing education about the benefits and importance of voluntary donors to build a culture of regular and voluntary donation among the community, innovation in implementing activities, such as the provision of donor buses complete with educational facilities in them, also helps to foster public interest and increase participation rates significantly.

Efforts to increase blood donor participation in the community are carried out through effective and educational communication strategies. PMI Medan City utilizes social media such as Instagram to build a positive, responsive, and trusted brand image, so that it can mobilize support from the wider community in blood donation activities. In addition, PMI also conducts direct socialization and education regarding the benefits and importance of blood donation with a persuasive approach that refers to the AIDDA (Awareness, Interest, Desire, Decision, Action) communication theory. This strategy aims to raise public awareness and interest in donating voluntarily, as well as overcome psychological barriers that may arise. With a combination of planned communication and good service, PMI Medan City continues to strive to increase public participation in blood donation in order to meet the need for sustainable blood transfusions.

Impact of Blood Donor Programs on Organizations and Communities

Blood donation socialization is an important effort to increase community participation to meet national blood needs. An effective campaign can change people's mindsets and behavior, especially by eliminating myths or negative stigmas surrounding blood donation. This study aims to understand the extent to which the socialization carried out can build public awareness and have an impact on increasing the number of blood donors (Salsabila et al., 2025).

The implementation of various blood donation programs in Medan City has had a positive impact both in terms of blood supply for hospitals and public awareness. The blood stock at the Medan City PMI has increased gradually so that it can meet some of the hospital's needs, especially in private hospitals that require around 200-300 bags per day. In addition, the socialization and education program increases public understanding of the benefits of donating regularly so that they become active donors and feel responsible for their own health and the needs of the community. Another positive impact is the emergence of awareness of the importance of health and cleanliness and the culture of helping each other which is part of community values. People are beginning to understand that donating blood not only saves other people's lives, but also makes the donor's body healthier and spreads a sense of empathy and social solidarity.

Effectiveness of Communication in Increasing Public Action and Awareness

In conveying messages, communication is not only done verbally but sometimes nonverbal communication is more capable of increasing public understanding of the information provided. The communication used should be inviting or persuasive in order to encourage the public to pay attention and understand what is being conveyed by PMI (Khudri et al., 2023).

From the results of interviews and observations, it can be concluded that communication carried out by PMI through various platforms and approaches is very effective in increasing public awareness and action. The use of social media with educational and interesting content is able to attract positive responses from people who were previously less aware of the benefits of blood donation. Personal approaches, such as socialization in the field and educational activities in schools and communities, also increase public motivation to participate. This strategy has been proven to be able to change negative perceptions and increase the frequency of donations gradually.

In addition, from interviews and community experiences conveyed, it is clear that the information provided by PMI and the direct approach carried out in the field also influenced individual motivation to routinely donate blood, with some stating that they felt healthier and never felt sick after donating, and had been donating for almost ten years routinely every few months. Communication and education strategies as reported also play an important role in increasing public awareness of the importance of voluntary donation and its benefits, including approaches to specific communities such as students, college students, and the elderly. Overall, the information and communication strategies carried out by PMI increase public motivation and awareness to donate blood voluntarily, thus contributing to efforts to meet blood needs amidst existing challenges.

Conclusion

This study shows that the communication strategy implemented by PMI Medan City plays a very important role in increasing public participation in blood donation. PMI utilizes various communication channels, especially social media such as Instagram, to disseminate educational, persuasive, and entertaining information. This consistent and targeted communication approach has succeeded in building a positive image of PMI in the eyes of the public and increasing awareness of the importance of blood donation as a much-needed humanitarian action. In addition, effective communication also helps overcome various obstacles and myths that often prevent people from participating.

Furthermore, the success of PMI Medan City's communication strategy lies not only in delivering the right message, but also in the organization's ability to establish good relationships with various parties, including local communities and the mass media. This strengthens the communication network and expands the reach of the message delivered. Thus, a holistic and integrated communication strategy is the main key to encouraging higher blood donor participation in the community. In the future, PMI is expected to continue to develop communication innovations to be more effective in inviting the public to contribute through regular blood donation.

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