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## Implementation of *the two-ways symmetrical model* of grunig and hunt on the performance of public relations of the geological agency in disaster mitigation in West Java

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### ABSTRACT

West Java is one of the areas in Indonesia that is most likely to experience geological disasters. This means that government agencies and the community must communicate risks clearly and effectively. In this case, the Geological Agency plays a key role in providing scientific data and distributing disaster mitigation information through its public relations function. This study aims to examine the application of the Two-Way Symmetric Model of communication in the performance of the Public Relations Unit of the Geological Agency in disaster mitigation efforts in West Java, Indonesia. In particular, this study explores the forms of communication applied, the role of symmetrical communication in building public trust and participation, and the supporting and inhibiting factors that influence its implementation. This study adopted a qualitative approach. Data were collected through field observations, comprehensive interviews with Geological Agency Public Relations personnel, and documentation studies derived from press-release manuscripts, social media content, and institutional communication materials related to disaster mitigation. Interactive models that include data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing are used to evaluate the data. Triangulation of sources and methods is used to ensure the validity of the research. The results of the study show that the Public Relations of the Geological Agency has begun to use two-way symmetrical communication by mixing formal communication channels, such as press releases, and collaborating with government agencies, with informal and digital media that allow the public to provide feedback. This method helps build public trust and involves people in disaster relief initiatives, especially when the material is easy to understand and there are opportunities for people to talk about it. However, the application of symmetrical communication is still partial and situational. This is due to the bureaucratic structure, lack of communication resources, and the fact that technocratic techniques are often used to write messages. Research shows that strengthening institutional commitments, improving communication capabilities, and incorporating public input into strategic decision-making are critical for maximizing the application of the Two-Way Symmetric Model in disaster mitigation communication.

**Keywords:** two ways symetrical model; public relations performance; geological agency; disaster mitigation; West Java.

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RESEARCH & PUBLISHING



## 1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is geographically vulnerable to several geological disasters, including earthquakes, tsunamis, and volcanic eruptions, owing to its location at the intersection of three major tectonic plates and the Pacific *Ring of Fire*. West Java Province is the most populous province in Indonesia, with a population of nearly 50 million people. West Java has a diverse landscape of mountains and plateaus, along with seven active volcanoes and seismic faults. In addition, West Java is vulnerable to hydrometeorological disasters, earthquakes caused by active faults such as the Lembang Fault, and volcanic eruptions. Moreover, West Java faces various interacting hazards, such as earthquakes, tsunamis, landslides, floods, and fires triggered by plate collisions and coastal megathrust faults (Sabita et al., 2024).

According to data from the Pacific Disaster Center (PDC Global, 2020), regarding the basic assessment of national disaster preparedness, West Java Province is the 4th-ranked province out of 32 provinces in Indonesia with Multi-Hazard Exposure, or in Geological language, Multi-Hazard Early Warning (MHE), with a score of 0.710. The score indicates that the disaster threats that can occur in West Java are as follows: earthquakes (57 %), floods (36 %), landslides (4 %), drought (27 %), extreme weather (97 %), tsunamis (1 %), flash floods (5 %), volcanoes (3 %), and forest and land fires (2 %). This is the result of a high level of exposure and vulnerability, which is balanced by a high level of resilience capacity.

Recently, the latest disaster occurred in Cisarua, West Bandung Regency, when a large landslide hit residential areas and claimed many lives. According to data from the West Java BPBD, until the 22nd day of searching, the Joint SAR team had handed over 101 body bags to the National Police DVI team. Previously, the devastating earthquake (Mw 5.6) that shook Cianjur, West Java, on November 21, 2022, caused at least 321 fatalities, 47,000 damaged buildings, and economic losses of up to 7.7 trillion Indonesian Rupiah (around US\$ 546 million) (Zakhra et al., 2023).

Most natural disasters are not tracked before they occur. Therefore, West Java conducts disaster mitigation by improving the quality of urban planning at the provincial level with the Disaster Risk Management (DRR) system to overcome the challenges of natural disaster threats. The Geological Agency plays a key role as an institution that is fully responsible for the provision of scientific data, implementation of monitoring, and issuance of warnings regarding possible geological disasters (Mukaddas et al., 2025).

The Geological Agency, as an institution with scientific authority, faces the challenge of transforming complex technical knowledge into communication that is easily understood by the general public. In disaster-prone situations, the effectiveness of public relations is not only measured by the speed of information dissemination but also by the extent to which people feel heard, involved, and trust the message conveyed. A symmetrical two-way communication method is essential to ensure that the mitigation process is not only top-down but also involves community input in the communication decision-making process.

Current social trends suggest that to help people understand the flood of conflicting and confusing digital information, they need inclusive communication channels alongside disaster data. Historically, government communication, especially in risky situations, has often been characterized by a one-sided approach. Other public relations models from Grunig and Hunt, such as *press agentry* (just publicity) or *public information* (just the dissemination of facts), often portray public relations as broadcasters and the public as passive recipients of information. The goal is to provide information or convince the public to accept the authority's decision.

However, disaster mitigation problems involving a wide range of industries and diverse interests require more sophisticated strategies. The *two-way symmetrical model* paradigm developed by Grunig and Hunt 1984 (Wahyudi, 2023), is relevant in this context. Theoretically, a two-way symmetrical model guarantees optimal and ethical PR performance results, because this model aims to change public behavior while emphasizing dialogue, negotiation, and mutual adjustment between organizations (Geological Agency) and the community (Harsari et al., 2024). This strategy aims to achieve mutual

understanding and conflict resolution, with Public Relations acting as a mediator to incorporate the local views, concerns, and knowledge of the community, thus facilitating the development of a more effective and acceptable mitigation plan.

The main function of the Geological Agency, when referring to the two-way symmetrical model, is risk communication management. Information about volcanic activity, landslides that may occur, or early warnings of earthquakes is conveyed accurately and easily understood by the general public. The Public Relations Department of the Geological Agency is responsible for translating technical terms into easy-to-understand English while responding to inputs, concerns, and questions from the public. This input is used to evaluate and improve the method of message delivery, the time of information dissemination, and the media used. In addition, the Public Relations Department of the Geological Agency encourages community participation in risk mapping, disaster socialization, and mitigation exercises. Data collected from the community, including observations of natural events or changes in the local environment, can enrich technical analyses and foster a sense of responsibility for mitigation efforts.

Therefore, this study aims to describe in more depth the implementation of the two-way symmetrical model in the performance of the Public Relations of the Geological Agency in disaster mitigation in West Java. The research questions are as follows: 1) What is the form of communication of the Public Relations of the Geological Agency in conveying disaster mitigation information to the public in West Java? 2) What is the role of symmetrical two-way communication in building public trust and participation in the West Java Geological Agency's disaster mitigation program? 3) What factors support and hinder the implementation of the two-way symmetrical model in the performance of the Public Relations of the Geological Agency in disaster mitigation in West Java? The results of this research are expected to enrich academic discussions in the field of Public Relations and disaster communication, as well as provide practical insights to improve the government's public relations strategy to build a more dialogical, participatory, and sustainable relationship with communities in disaster-prone areas, especially in West Java Province.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous research has been conducted on the application of the Two-Way Symmetrical Model in government relations techniques in the business and government sectors. However, there is still relatively little research that directly links this model to the effectiveness of public relations in government technical institutions in disaster mitigation, namely the Geological Agency, especially at the regional level, such as in the West Java Province.

Some research originated from the normative framework of Grunig and Hunt, which placed the Symmetrical Two-Way model as the main model in contemporary PR practice. A study conducted by Nugraheni (2022) entitled "*Implementation of Two Ways Symmetric Communication at Solo Paragon Mall during the COVID-19 pandemic*" (Nugraheni et al., 2022). This study explores how the *Two-Way Symmetric model* is applied by Solo Paragon Mall Public Relations to maintain two-way relations with the public during the COVID-19 pandemic through responsive and dialogical communication strategies.

In addition, Agus Naryoso and Muhammad Bayu Widagdo, in "*Strategic Values of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Thematic Natural Disasters in the Context of the Grunig Public Relations Model*" (Naryoso et al., 2021), make an important contribution to understanding disaster CSR as a Public Relations strategy. The study emphasizes that thematic CSR of natural disasters can be a strategic instrument for organizations in building image, legitimacy, and relationships with the public, by referring to the conceptual framework of Grunig's Public Relations models, especially in the context of two-way communication.

Meanwhile, Elrika Kezhia Josephine, Nicholas Ronald Parris, and Rawi Diwangkara (2024) titled "*Two-Way Symmetrical Model in Enhancing Inclusivity: A Case Study of Sunyi Coffee*" (Josephine et al., 2024). This study analyzes the use of the Two-Way Symmetric Model in the context of Sunyi Coffee's organizational communication to strengthen engagement between staff and customers, focusing on dialogue and feedback as an inclusive communication strategy.

Then, Nurita Muhamad et al. (2025) titled "*Communication of Mitigation of Bawaslu Banyumas in the Prevention of Violations of the 2024 Simultaneous Regional Elections*" (Muhamad, 2025). Although it is not directly about natural disaster mitigation, this study applies the *Two-Way Symmetrical Model* in Bawaslu public relations communication to build interactive relationships with the public to handle the issue of holding regional elections, showing the relevance of the symmetrical model in the context of public relations of government agencies.

Although Grunig and Hunt's *Two-Way Symmetrical* model has established itself as a normative standard in contemporary public relations practice, a review of the current literature reveals a striking contextual gap. Previous studies, such as those conducted by on the inclusive culinary sector or (Nugraheni et al., 2022) on shopping center crisis management, tend to focus on business entities with flexible organizational structures oriented towards customer satisfaction. There is a literature gap that specifically tests the application of this model to government technical institutions such as the Geological Agency, where communication is not just a marketing tool, but a crucial mechanism in the mitigation of geological disasters that threaten the safety of human lives. This gap is increasingly evident at the regional level, such as in West Java, a region with a high disaster risk that requires a bridge of communication between scientific authorities and local communities.

Although both studies use the *Two-Way Symmetric model*, they tend to view PR activities as a post-disaster response or part of a periodic social responsibility program. These studies generally find that dialogical two-way communication can improve public trust, organizational legitimacy, and the quality of ongoing relationships between companies and their stakeholders. However, most of this research was conducted within non-governmental organizations or companies, thus failing to capture the complexity of communication within government agencies, which are characterized by bureaucratic structures.

Instead, this research positions disaster mitigation communication as an ongoing process that takes place before, during, and after a potential disaster. Although several studies have used *the Two-Way Symmetric Model* in the context of government or organizational public relations, no study has specifically examined the Implementation of the Two-Way Symmetric Model on the Public Relations Performance of the Geological Agency in Disaster Mitigation in West Java" or similar disaster institutions. This strengthens the research gap that combines Grunig and Hunt's theoretical communication model with disaster mitigation practices in specialized technical government agencies in the West Java region, a focus that has not been empirically explored in the current literature.

Theoretically and methodologically, this study identifies the dominance of technocratic and one-way approaches in government risk communication that have not been critically analyzed. Previous studies, such as research Naryoso et al. (2021), disaster CSR often positions communication as a responsive or periodic activity. This creates a gap in understanding how symmetrical communication operates as an ongoing process that must overcome rigid structural and bureaucratic constraints. This study aims to fill this gap by exploring the boundary *conditions* in which Grunig's dialogical principle must be confronted with hierarchical administrative procedures, a dynamic that often results in information responses feeling slow, even though the technical data are very accurate.

The main contribution of this research lies in the introduction of a new mechanism in the form of the role of public relations as a "cultural and technical translator" in government agencies, specifically during disasters. Through a new qualitative dataset from interactions at the Geological Agency, this study offers a stronger identification of how public feedback is used to negotiate meaning and education rather than just one-sided persuasion. By dissecting real challenges, such as the limitations of competent human resources in the field of disaster communication and technical language barriers, this study provides a more adaptive practical framework for government public relations. The results not only enrich academic discussions regarding symmetric theory in high-risk contexts but also provide strategic insights for building more dialogical and sustainable relationships with communities in disaster-prone areas.

### 3. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative methodology characterized by a descriptive-exploratory research

design. The qualitative methodology was chosen because this study aims to comprehensively understand the processes, meanings, and communication practices used by the Public Relations of the Geological Agency in disaster mitigation. The researcher aims to decipher the dynamics of bilateral communication between institutions, stakeholders, and communities in disaster-prone areas in West Java Province. This is consistent with the statement made by which states that qualitative methods allow researchers to explore the meaning, understanding, and perception of research subjects in depth. In line with this, states in the same way that qualitative methods are effective in exploring the social processes and meanings constructed by individuals in a given context.

The research approach used in this study is descriptive. The descriptive approach helps the researcher explain and describe in detail the implementation of the two-way symmetrical model in PR performance, as well as explore the factors that affect the success and limitations of the application of the model in disaster practice. This statement is supported by Sarosa (Sarosa, 2021), which states that the descriptive approach is able to present a detailed and accurate description of the object of research, establish categorization and classification, and explain the background and context of a situation.

### **3.1 Data Collection Techniques**

In this study, three data collection techniques were used: (1) direct observation. Based on assumptions (Arikunto, 2018). Direct observation is carried out by observing the research location directly using the senses. In other words, the research team directly observes all activities related to the object being studied. In this study, observations were made on public relations communication activities, such as socialization activities, press conferences, cross-agency coordination, and the use of communication media as a form of the duties and roles of the Public Relations of the Geological Agency in carrying out disaster mitigation programs in West Java. This observation aims to see firsthand how the principles of two-way communication are applied in practice, including public responses to the message conveyed. (2) In-depth interviews are defined as data collection techniques that involve face-to-face interviews between the interviewer and the interviewee. According to the use of live interviews can provide insight into specific issues. The researchers interviewed the Public Relations Staff of the Geological Agency (3). The documentation study in this study was carried out by collecting written data related to research issues, namely, in the form of analysis of press releases, activity reports, socialization materials, social media content, and policy documents related to disaster mitigation communication. These documents are used to strengthen the data from interviews and observations.

### **3.2 Informant Selection**

A research informant is defined as an individual who is competent in providing information about the data desired by the researcher for the purpose of answering the research question (Moleong, 2017). In qualitative research, informants are generally determined in two ways: *purposive* and *snowball sampling*. In this study, the researcher determines the informant using *the purposive technique*; in other words, the researcher determines the informant based on their knowledge, experience, and direct involvement with the issue being studied. Referring to this opinion, the researcher designated the informant in this study, namely the Public Relations staff of the Geological Agency, as the *key informant*.

### **3.3 Data Analysis**

The data analysis process in this study was carried out using a model. The data analysis in this study was carried out in an interactive and continuous manner, starting from data collection to the formation of conclusions. The first phase includes data reduction, which includes selecting and focusing on data obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation relevant to the communication practices of the Geological Agency's Public Relations in disaster mitigation in West Java. The relevant data is then organized into thematic narratives to explain communication patterns, feedback mechanisms, and modes of interaction between public relations and society.

The final phase includes the development of conclusions and verification, which is achieved through a comprehensive assessment of the significance of the data by correlating it with the principles of the Symmetrical Two-Way Communication Model, including discussion, transparency, and tailoring of

messages according to public responses. The verification procedure uses triangulation of sources and techniques to ensure the validity of the results. This analysis evaluates the suitability of two-way symmetrical communication with the performance practices of the Geological Agency's Public Relations in the field of disaster mitigation.

## 4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 The Form of Public Relations Communication of the Geological Agency in Delivering Disaster Mitigation Information

Grunig and Hunt (1984) explain that the two-way symmetrical model positions communication as a dialogical process that aims to facilitate the understanding of collaboration between companies/institutions and society, rather than focusing solely on persuasion or one-way distribution of information (Erlianti et al., 2024). Based on the results of interviews with Mr. Cipto Handoko and Mrs. Titan Roskusumah, as Public Relations staff of the Geological Agency, it is explained that the Public Relations of the Geological Agency carries out a form of communication in the delivery of disaster mitigation information by combining a combination of formal and informal approaches that complement each other. Official methods serve as the primary basis for disseminating disaster information, especially in contexts that require clarity, accuracy, and institutional credibility.

"If referring to how the Geological Agency's Public Relations communication form in conveying disaster mitigation information to the community in West Java, there are two forms or patterns.

First, we use a formal form of communication, and second, which is informal one." Said Titan.

Furthermore, Titan explained that the form of formal communication in question is the Public Relations section of the Geological Agency that routinely disseminates information through official press releases, press conferences, reports on the status of volcanic activity, earthquakes, and landslides, as well as coordinating with local governments and the Regional Disaster Management Agency (BPBD).

The information disseminated through these official channels basically comes from technological monitoring and scientific analysis carried out by geologists. However, the researcher analyzed that the Public Relations staff of the Geological Agency did not present this technical material to the public in its raw form. They act as translators by explaining scientific terms to make it easier for non-technical audiences to understand.

"We received data from geologists that were very technical, full of scientific terms. Our job in public relations is to repackage that information so that people can understand what they have to do, not just know the data." Said Cipto.

Referring to the results of the interview, it can be concluded that Public Relations plays a mediator between the scientific world and the needs of public information. This role is crucial in the context of disaster mitigation, as a misunderstanding of information can lead to an increased risk of panic or even a disregard for potential dangers.

In addition, press conferences and official reports also serve as a means of building institutional credibility. One of the informants emphasized that the formal delivery of information is necessary to maintain public trust and prevent the spread of false information. Sipto stated:

"If it concerns the status of the mountain or the potential for disaster, we must convey it through official channels. It is important so that there is no interpretation of itself in the community and the media." Cipto explained.

On the other hand, the Public Relations of the Geological Agency also utilizes digital media, especially social media and the institution's official website, as a communication channel that is considered faster, more flexible, and reaches a wider audience. Digital media is used to deliver real-time updates on disaster information, especially when there is an increase in geological activity that requires public attention. Through this channel, the public not only acts as a receiver of information but also has a space to convey their questions, responses, and concerns directly.

Furthermore, Titan and Cipto explained that Public Relations is aware of the importance of the character of digital media that demands simpler and more communicative language. The process of

translating technical terms is one of the main focuses in digital content management.

"If it is on social media, we cannot use the language of technical reports. We have to simplify the term; sometimes we even use analogies so that people immediately understand what it means." Said Titan.

The statement shows that Public Relations is trying to adapt the message to the characteristics of heterogeneous digital audiences. However, this study also found that the process of adjusting messages still faces limitations, especially in understanding the social and cultural context of communities at the local level. Some informants admitted that differences in social background, education level, and community experience of disasters often make the message conveyed not fully understood as intended.

This is reflected in Titan's statement, which states:

"Sometimes we feel that the language is simple, but in the field, it turns out that there are still people who interpret differently. This is usually due to the diverse local context." Titan said.

However, even though digital media opens up interaction spaces, the communication that has been built is not completely dialogical in a deep sense. The interactions that occur are more often in the form of brief responses to public questions, while the process of exploring people's aspirations and understanding more systematically is still limited.

In general, the form of communication carried out by the Public Relations of the Geological Agency has moved beyond the one-way pattern of information delivery. The existence of feedback space through digital media shows efforts towards two-way communication. However, this study found that the intensity of direct dialogue with the community still depends on certain disaster situations or incidental socialization activities.

"If there is an increase in status or socialization activities, the communication is indeed more intense. But if the situation is normal, interaction with the community does not always run regularly." Said Cipto.

The statement indicates that the practice of dialogical communication has not been fully institutionalized as part of the daily performance of public relations. Thus, although digital media has been used as a relatively interactive means of communication, the sustainable implementation of two-way communication still faces challenges, especially in making dialogue with the community a consistent and integrated communication practice in disaster mitigation strategies.

Referring to the above statement, it shows that the form of communication used by the Public Relations section of the Geological Agency in disaster mitigation in West Java contains several elements of the Two-Way Symmetrical Model, although the implementation is not optimal. Grunig and Hunt (1984) explained that the Two-Way Symmetrical Model positions communication as a dialogical process that aims to build mutual understanding between companies and society, not just focusing on persuasion or one-way distribution of information (Kriyantono, 2017). The results of this study show that the Public Relations of the Geological Agency has tried to build dialogue through socialization forums, collaboration between institutions, and the use of digital media that facilitates public comment.

Forms of communication that combine formal channels and digital media as a form of informal communication show that there are efforts to expand the space for dialogue. These findings are in line with Grunig's view that organizations that adopt symmetrical communication will tend to utilize research and public input in designing communication strategies (Rahmi, 2023). However, this study also found that the dialogue is still situational and has not been institutionalized as a routine communication practice. This condition indicates that the application of the two-way symmetrical model in technical government institutions is still in the transition stage from a one-way communication pattern to a more dialogical communication.

#### **4.2 The Role of Two-Way Symmetrical Model Communication in Building Public Trust and Participation in the Geological Agency's Disaster Mitigation Program in West Java.**

The findings of the study show that the application of the principle of a symmetrical two-way model plays an important role in building public trust in the Geological Agency. This trust was not solely born from the position of the Geological Agency as a state scientific institution, but was formed through

communication experiences that were felt directly by the community. When the public feels involved, given space to ask questions, and obtains understandable explanations, the relationship between institutions and the public becomes stronger.

"That trust arises not only because we are an official institution, but because the public feels that we want to listen and explain, not just tell or warn," Titan said.

Socialization forums, discussions with community leaders, and direct meetings in disaster-prone areas are important spaces for building more equal communication. In these forums, Public Relations not only conveys technical information, but also listens to people's experiences, concerns, and interpretations of disaster risks. Research has found that this approach helps reduce the psychological distance between institutions and communities, especially in areas that have had traumatic experiences with disasters.

Two-way communication also allows Public Relations to understand people's risk perceptions that often differ from the technical assessments of experts. Some societies assess disaster risk based on daily experiences, hereditary stories, or socio-economic factors, which are not always in line with scientific indicators.

"Sometimes, technically, the risk is not high, but people are already very worried because of previous experience. If they don't listen, they can no longer trust official information." Cipto explained.

Through this feedback, Public Relations seeks to adjust the way of delivering messages to be more contextual and relevant to local conditions. This adjustment has to do not only with language, but also with examples, analogies, and the emphasis of messages that society considers important. This process demonstrates an effort to achieve mutual understanding between institutions and the public, which is at the heart of a symmetrical two-way communication model.

The study also found that public participation in disaster mitigation programs tends to increase when the public understands the rationale behind the policies or technical recommendations being delivered. When Public Relations explains the scientific basis of a policy and opens up a space for discussion, the public is more accepting and willing to be involved. This is, as stated by Titan:

"If the public already understands why a policy is taken, they are usually more ready to follow directions. It's a different story if you are only given an order without explanation." Said Titan.

In this context, two-way communication not only serves as a means of conveying information but also as a medium for education and negotiation of meaning. The community is no longer positioned as an object that must be obeyed, but as a subject who is invited to understand and participate in mitigation efforts. These findings confirm that the application of symmetrical two-way communication in the performance of the Geological Agency's Public Relations contributes significantly to strengthening trust and increasing public participation in disaster mitigation in West Java.

The results of the study on the role of two-way communication in building public trust and participation show a strong connection with the concept of the Two-Way Symmetric Model proposed by Grunig and Hunt. In this model, communication is understood as a dialogue process that aims to achieve *mutual understanding* between the organization and the public, not just a tool to influence or control public opinion (Sumarto, 2016). The results of the study show that the communication practices of the Geological Agency Public Relations have moved in this direction, especially when the public is given space to express their views, concerns, and experiences related to disaster risk.

Public trust built through experience is involved and heard in line with Grunig's view that quality organization-public relations are characterized by trust, openness, and mutual commitment (Nurlaila et al., 2025). Thus, trust comes not only from the scientific authority of the institution, but also from the quality of communication interactions, reinforcing Grunig's argument that the legitimacy of an organization in the long run is largely determined by its ability to build an equal relationship with its public.

Furthermore, Cipto and Titan conveyed the ability of Public Relations to understand the difference between public risk perception and technical assessment, showing adaptive and reflective communication practices. Within the framework of Grunig's theory, the use of public feedback as the basis for message adjustment is a key indicator of two-way symmetrical communication (Irmayanti et al., 2025). Adjusting the way messages are delivered based on the social context and public concerns indicates that public

relations not only maintains the organization's point of view but also opens up room for change in its communication strategy.

The increase in public participation found in this study can also be explained through Grunig's theory, which places symmetrical communication as the foundation of public engagement (Harditia & Sudadi, 2025). When the public understands the rationality of the policies and technical recommendations conveyed, communication is no longer perceived as one-sided instruction, but rather as a shared process in dealing with disaster risks. In this context, communication serves as a medium of education as well as negotiation of meaning, as Grunig emphasizes that the ultimate goal of symmetrical communication is the achievement of mutual understanding and interests between the organization and the public.

Thus, the data of this study confirms that the application of the principle of symmetrical two-way communication in the performance of the Public Relations of the Geological Agency is not only practically relevant, but also strengthens the theoretical validity of the Grunig model in the context of disaster communication and government public relations. This model has been shown to be able to explain the dynamics of the relationship between state institutions and society in high-risk situations, although its application is still influenced by structural and contextual factors typical of government organizations.

#### **4.3 Supporting and Inhibiting Factors of the Implementation of the Two-Way Symmetric Model on the Performance of Public Relations of the Geological Agency in Disaster Mitigation in West Java.**

The results of the study identified a number of factors that support the implementation of a symmetrical two-way communication model in the performance of the Public Relations of the Geological Agency in disaster mitigation in West Java. Cipto and Titan conveyed that the main supporting factors that are most striking are as follows:

##### **4.3.1. Availability of data and technical expertise within the Geological Agency**

The existence of geologists and a continuous monitoring system are credible and scientifically based sources of information. This condition provides a solid foundation for public relations in conveying information to the public. Cipto says: "In terms of data and science, we are very strong. The information we convey to the public is based on direct monitoring and scientific studies. So, in substance, the information that we convey to the public is ensured to be relevant and reliable." Said Cipto.

So, with the accuracy of this data, the Geological Agency's public relations team will not have difficulty answering questions and providing comments both on social media and when there is direct socialization with the public. This will help synchronization when the communication process is two-way.

##### **4.3.2. Institutional legitimacy of the Geological Agency**

The Geological Agency is a state institution that has authority in the field of disasters as an important supporting factor. This status makes the information conveyed relatively easy to accept by local governments, the media, and the public.

"When we talk about potential disasters, the community and local governments usually immediately pay attention because they know that it is the authority of the Geological Agency. So, our Public Relations team, when conveying information to the public, will be easy to trust, and usually the local government itself will immediately respond to the information we convey." Titan said.

Initial attention is an important capital for Public Relations to build further interactions. Institutional legitimacy makes it easier for public relations to initiate socialization forums, coordinate across institutions, and enter community spaces. This suggests that initial trust stemming from institutional legitimacy can develop into relational trust through open and responsive communication.

##### **4.3.3. Use of digital media**

The development of the use of digital media has also opened up a wider and faster space for interaction between Public Relations and the public. Social media and official pages can convey information in real time while providing a channel for the public to submit questions and responses. In

this case, Cipto and Titan said this process is also in collaboration with the local government and BPBD.

However, this disaster mitigation process found a number of inhibiting factors in the implementation of symmetrical two-way communication. Hierarchical bureaucratic structures and strict administrative procedures often limit the flexibility of public relations to respond quickly to public dynamics. The internal coordination and approval process makes responding to issues that develop in the community not always possible to do directly. This is revealed by Cipto and Titan:

"We cannot convey all information immediately. Some stages and procedures need to be followed, and this sometimes makes our response feel slow." Said Titan.

Cipto added that the limitation of human resources who have special competencies in the field of disaster communication is also a challenge in itself. HR who become the PR team still have to rely on a limited number of personnel to manage communication in a wide and diverse area. In addition, the dominance of the technocratic approach in the preparation of messages often makes it difficult to realize an equal dialogue with society.

"Usually, we also like to be constrained by the meaning of the message conveyed by the research team. The educational, cultural, and religious backgrounds of the people of West Java are very diverse. Automatically, it will have the same effect on the message that we must process and digest the language of disaster that is only understood by experts, but the meaning of the message must be understood by the community. Meanwhile, our human resources also sometimes do not understand what these experts mean. So, we also need to understand, digest, and interpret the meaning of the information so that it can be easily understood by the public." Titan said.

These findings suggest that although the principle of symmetrical two-way communication has begun to be applied, the practice is still partial and situational. The implementation of the model is greatly influenced by structural factors, resource capacity, and the complexity of the social context of the community. Thus, the success of symmetrical two-way communication in the performance of the Geological Agency's Public Relations requires institutional strengthening, communication capacity building, and a commitment to make public feedback an integral part of the disaster mitigation communication strategy.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

This study concludes that the performance of the Public Relations of the Geological Agency in disaster mitigation in West Java has shown real efforts in implementing the principle of symmetrical two-way communication, although it has not been fully institutionalized systematically. The communication practice carried out is no longer limited to the delivery of one-way information, but has opened a space for dialogue through socialization and interaction forums with the community, as well as the use of digital media. The process of translating technical information into a more communicative language is an important element in building public understanding of disaster risk, while strengthening the legitimacy of the Geological Agency as a credible and trustworthy source of information.

Further, the study found that symmetrical two-way communication plays a significant role in building trust and encouraging public participation in disaster mitigation programs. This trust is formed when the community feels involved, heard, and receives contextual explanations of the policies and technical recommendations submitted. Through public feedback, public relations can understand the difference between public risk perceptions and the Institution's technical assessments, allowing for adjustments to communication messages and strategies. In this context, communication not only functions as a means of information but also as a medium of education and negotiation of meaning that strengthens the relationship between the institution and the community.

However, the implementation of symmetrical two-way communication still faces a number of structural and cultural challenges. Hierarchical bureaucratic structures, limited disaster communication resources, and the dominance of technocratic approaches in message formulation limit the flexibility of public relations in responding to public dynamics quickly and sustainably. In addition, the diversity of disaster literacy levels and socio-cultural backgrounds of communities in West Java demands more

adaptive and contextual communication strategies. Therefore, strengthening the strategic role of public relations, increasing the capacity of dialogical communication, and integrating public feedback in communication decision-making are important prerequisites for realizing a more complete implementation of symmetrical two-way communication in disaster mitigation.

### **Ethical Approval**

Not Applicable

### **Informed Consent Statement**

Not Applicable

### **Authors' Contributions**

Not Applicable

### **Disclosure statement**

The author states that there are no conflicts of interest, either financial or non-financial, that affect the research, data analysis, or writing process of this article. All data are collected and analyzed independently based on the ethical principles of academic research. The views and interpretations presented in this article are solely the responsibility of the author and do not represent the official stance of any particular institution.

### **Data Availability Statement**

The primary data in this study is sourced from the direct results of the research, while the secondary data is sourced from several research publications. If any researcher wishes to conduct further research on the same topic, the researcher is willing to share the data if necessary.

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