

Crisis communication management government public relation of Serang City through digital media

Dian Wardiana Sjuchro¹, Ronny Yudhi Septa Priana², Rina Fitriana³,
Mohd Nazri Abdul Raji⁴

¹Faculty of Communication Sciences, Universitas Padjadjaran, Bandung, Indonesia

²Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa. Serang, Indonesia

³Faculty of Hospitality Management, Politeknik Sahid, Jakarta, Indonesia

⁴Faculty of Technical and Vocational, Universitas Pendidikan Sultan Idris, Malaysia

Submitted: 12 February 2026, **Revised:** 23 July 2026, **Accepted:** 28 July 2026, **Published:** 13 August 2026

ABSTRACT

Background: The development of digital media accelerates the flow of public information and sometimes facilitates disinformation that affects the public's image and trust in local governments. It requires their public relations (PR) to be able to manage information, messages, and media to enhance positive images within the community. **Purpose:** This study aimed to analyze the role of PR in Serang City in managing communication crises in the digital media era; then to reveal the effectiveness of PR communication strategies and uncover the obstacles encountered. **Methods:** This research employed a qualitative approach with a case study method. Data were obtained through in-depth interviews with PR staff and media officers from eight regional government agencies (OPD). Data were analyzed through reduction, presentation, and conclusion. **Results:** The PR of Serang City monitored current issues developing in the community, compiled and designed official messages, and utilized social media as the primary communication channel. This strategy was deemed effective in maintaining the stability of public information. Limited human resources and the rapid spread of hoaxes in the digital space were challenges faced, in addition to the lack of coordination and consistency of information within the government. **Conclusion:** crisis communication management is implemented by local governments using digital media as the main communication medium, but human resource competencies remain limited to improving coordination and designing more systematic communication so that information can be more effective and consistent. **Implications:** The results of this study are expected to be a reference for local governments to improve human capacity and build an integrated communication system to maintain credibility and public trust.

Keywords: Communication management; crisis communication; digital media; government public relations; local government

To cite this article (APA Style):

Sjuchro, D.W., Priana, R.Y.S., Fitriana, R., & Raji, M.N.A . (2026). Crisis communication management government public relation of Serang City through digital media. *PRofesi Humas*. 11(1), 81-99. <https://doi.org/10.24198/prh.v11i1.69832>

Correspondence: Prof. Dr. Dian Wardiana Sjuchro, M.Si, Universitas Padjadjaran. Jln. Raya Bandung-Sumedang Km. 21 Jatinangor, Sumedang 45363. *Email:* d.wardiana@unpad.ac.id

INTRODUCTION

The development of information and communication technology has opened up a digital communication space that has brought changes in the intensity of communication, including public communication on social media (Holland et al., 2021). Social media is currently used not only as a medium for disseminating information but also as a medium for shaping public opinion, evaluating government policies, and providing direction to the needs of the community, as well as conveying criticism of government institutions regarding programs and policies. Coombs (2026) stated that today's society can directly enjoy information, allowing the flow of information to move dynamically, even tending to be free without any specific direction and responsibility formally institutionalized, so that the government no longer holds full control over the flow of information and the formation of public discourse.

These changes and shifts in the function of social media pose a challenge for the government, especially when facing critical situations. The digital era has also shifted the meaning, where crisis events do not always arise from major events but can instead be triggered by small things that go viral, such as controversial statements or policy information misinterpreted by a group of people and disseminated for public consumption. This shows that crisis communication is dynamic and can be a threat if left unchecked and not

managed quickly and properly. Coombs (2026) stated that crisis communication must be part of an organization's management strategy, not merely a reactive response to an incident or event.

Crisis communication management for the government is inevitable as part of public service. Public communication during a crisis has a massive impact, including public trust in the government (Cornelissen, 2020). Crisis communication concerns the public interest and government accountability. In certain situations, the public demands that the government explain situations and policies, information about which has been widely consumed and disseminated, and that it be handled properly, thereby demonstrating the government's responsibility openly, adhering to the principles of transparency, credibility, and creating a sense of security for the public (Cornelissen, 2020; Mhagama, 2015). Ulmer et al., (2018) states that effective crisis communication in public institutions must prioritize the principles of transparency, credibility, and the ability to build a sense of security amidst information uncertainty. This demonstrates that crisis communication management in government functions as a mechanism to maintain social stability and prevent growing public distrust.

Organizational crises refer to conditions that develop through specific stages. Ulmer et al (2018) explains that crises generally progress from a prodromal phase (early symptoms), an acute phase, a chronic phase, and then a resolution phase. This understanding is

important because it emphasizes that crises do not emerge suddenly, but are often preceded by early signs that can be detected through issue monitoring. In the context of digital media, issue monitoring becomes even more crucial because public conversations can evolve rapidly through online platforms. Therefore, government organizations require a monitoring system capable of detecting potential crises early on and mapping the patterns of issue spread in the digital space (Li et al., 2021; Veil et al., 2011).

The complexity of crisis communication has increased with the development of social media, as public communication patterns are no longer one-way. The public not only receives information but also produces, disseminates, and reinterprets it according to their interests or perceptions. In a crisis, the public often seeks information from multiple sources simultaneously, including online media, official government social media accounts, and even networks of friends deemed more trustworthy. Holland et al. (2021) emphasized that modern society utilizes social media as a primary source of information during crises, but at the same time, digital spaces become a breeding ground for rumors and alternative narratives. This situation requires the government to be able to convey information quickly, consistently, and easily understood, as communication delays can create room for speculation.

The speed of information dissemination on social media is also related to the virality mechanism driven by platform algorithms.

Controversial, emotional, or sensational information tends to spread more quickly and gain higher public attention (Breakwell, 2020; Li et al., 2021). This phenomenon aligns with the findings of Schwaderer (2025) that fake news can spread faster than true news due to its greater emotional appeal. For local government communications, it poses a serious challenge because disinformation can disrupt the clarification process, damage the government's reputation, and increase public pressure.

Besides disinformation, another major issue in digital crisis communications is the fragmentation of information authority. The public no longer relies on official sources as the sole reference, but instead tends to trust sources perceived as close and relevant, including local influencers, community accounts, and independent online media outlets. This phenomenon reinforces the view that the credibility of government communications is determined by not only the content of the message but also public trust in the institution delivering it. In risk communication theory, credibility and trust determine the effectiveness of messages, particularly in crisis situations that create uncertainty (MacKay et al., 2021).

To analyze crisis communication strategies, Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) is one of the most widely used theoretical frameworks in modern crisis communication research (Machsunah et al., 2026). SCCT explains that an organization's response to a crisis needs to be tailored to the type of crisis and the public's attribution of responsibility to

the organization (Coombs, 2026). If the public perceives the organization as the primary cause of the crisis, the communication strategy required is not simply clarification, but it must include responsibility, corrective action, and reputation restoration communication.

Crisis communication is always related to image restoration. In the process of studying crisis communication, a researcher can also utilize image restoration theory (Anagusti et al, 2024; Nurjanah et al, 2025). Image restoration theory explains that organizations can use communication strategies, including denial, correction, and apology, to repair their image. Image restoration must be a concrete action that can change public opinion based on changes in the service received by the public based on their direct experience of the service.

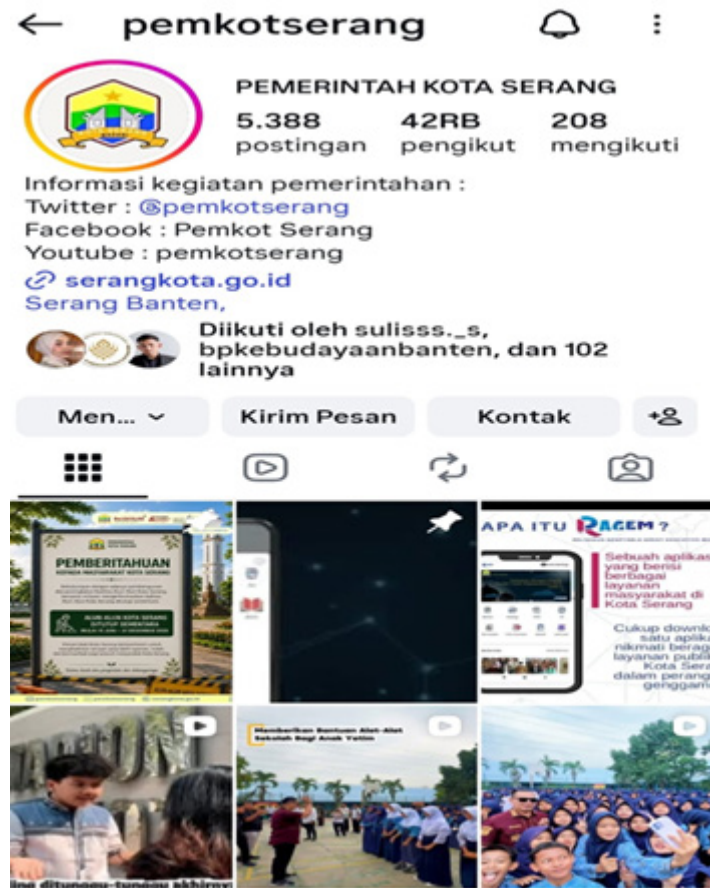
Yulianti & Boer (2020) stated that crisis communication in the digital age is influenced by the principles of dialogic communication. Taylor & Kent, (2014) emphasize that effective organizational communication in the digital space should be built on dialogue, openness, and a willingness to listen to the public. Tresnoati (2026) argues that dialogic principles in government PR are highly relevant because the public expects a response to their aspirations. Local governments that rely solely on one-way communication will face public rejection, especially when crises generate collective emotions and dissatisfaction from the public (Bachri et al, 2026).

In practice, local government crisis communications often face structural barriers

in the form of bureaucratic coordination. Iqbal et al (2026) stated that local governments are comprised of regional apparatus organizations (OPD) with differing authorities, requiring clear coordination mechanisms for information dissemination. When coordination is suboptimal, messages delivered to the public, in any form, become inconsistent and cause confusion. Aji et al. (2026) emphasized that weaknesses in issue and crisis management often lie in unsystematic communication planning, weak crisis communication standard operating procedures (SOPs), and a tendency to react to issues as they escalate. However, crisis communication in the digital space requires a rapid response supported by uniform information across agencies.

Taylor & Kent (2014) States that in addition to internal coordination, human resource capacity is also a crucial factor in digital crisis communications. Managing digital communications requires specialized skills such as content management, social media data analysis, the ability to construct persuasive narratives, and professionally handled public comments. Researchers argue that under certain circumstances, government PR is also required to provide clarification quickly without creating new conflicts. This demonstrates that digital crisis communications require more complex competencies than traditional communications, as organizations must be able to respond in real time while maintaining institutional credibility (Afrilia et al, 2023).

Social media has become a primary



Source: Instagram @pemkotserang , 2026

Figure 1 Serang City Instagram Account

platform for the public to express aspirations, complaints about public services, and even criticism of local government officials (Rasyid, 2025). Based on preliminary research conducted through systematic observation of the official Instagram account of Serang City, @pemkotserang, from January to December 2025, researchers identified at least 5388 Instagram posts containing several public policy issues that have become communication challenges in the digital realm (Figure 1). Public responses in the comments section of the official Instagram account and discussions surrounding government news indicate that some policy issues have generated significant public attention and criticism.

The most prominent issues include criticism of the demolition of the Rau Market area, which is considered to have failed to address traffic congestion and environmental issues; complaints that road improvement projects are concentrated only in certain parts of the city; public opposition to the demolition and relocation of street vendors; debate over the planned revitalization of Serang Square; unresolved concerns regarding the transfer of assets from Serang Regency to Serang City; public criticism of the restructuring of the Pasar Lama and Pasar Kependean; and discussions regarding the implementation of the free school policy. These issues spread rapidly through digital media and generated widespread public

engagement, requiring timely clarification and communication responses from the Serang City Government.

Preliminary findings indicate that crisis communication in the digital environment have become a recurring phenomenon for the Serang City Government. The rapid spread of information, criticism, and public opinion through digital platforms increases the potential for misinformation, negative public sentiment, and reputational risk. Therefore, the Serang City Government PR Office is required to implement adaptive crisis communication management through continuous issue monitoring, cross-agency coordination, timely dissemination of official information, and active engagement with the public to maintain institutional credibility and public trust.

Although the study of crisis communication has expanded widely, research focusing on the crisis communication practices of local government PR in the digital media era remains relatively limited, particularly in the context of developing cities in Indonesia. Much crisis communication research focuses on business organizations, national institutions, or large-scale crises. Therefore, studies examining the PR practices of a local government in dealing with digital crises require empirical evidence. Yet, local governments have unique characteristics due to their close relationship with the community, limited resources, and high public expectations for information transparency. Therefore, this research is novel to provide a clearer picture of the crisis

communication strategies implemented by local government PR and the challenges faced.

Based on the foregoing discussion, this study focuses on analyzing crisis communication management implemented by the PR Office of the Serang City Government through the digital media. Specifically, it addresses three research questions: How is crisis communication management implemented by the PR Office of the Serang City Government in responding to issues that emerge in the digital space? What communication strategies are employed to respond to crises disseminated through social media and online news platforms? and What challenges are encountered upon implementing digital-based crisis communication, particularly in terms of inter-agency coordination, limited human resources, and the spread of disinformation? Accordingly, the objectives of this study are to analyze the implementation of crisis communication management by the PR Office of the Serang City Government in the digital media era, identify the communication strategies employed in responding to evolving public opinion, and examine the challenges that influence the effectiveness of digital public communication within local government institutions.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research used a qualitative approach with a case study design to acknowledge the crisis communication management strategies and practices implemented by the Serang

City Government PR in handling information dynamics in the digital media era (Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2017). This research was conducted at the Serang City Government, Banten Province, from January to December 2025. Subjects included PR officers, the Serang City Government's official social media managers, and other parties involved in the public information dissemination process. The purpose of this study is to examine the crisis communication management mechanisms carried out by the PR of Serang City, message development, and the use of social media as the main public communication channel.

The primary research instrument was the researcher herself, supported by interview guidelines and observation sheets to ensure the data collection process remained focused (Creswell, 2014). Informants were selected based on their relevance to the research objectives, their knowledge of the crisis communication context, and their direct involvement in local government PR activities (Miles & Huberman, 2018).

Data were collected through in-depth interviews with PR staff of the Serang city government who specifically handled social media and public information services, observations of digital communication activities, and documentation of press releases, official social media posts, online communication archives, and online media coverage. Data analysis was conducted interactively through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing, grouping findings into

main themes according to the research focus (Miles & Huberman, 2018). Data validity was maintained through triangulation of sources and methods by comparing the results of interviews, observations, and document reviews (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The entry of digital media into the public communication space has transformed the way local governments deal with crises. While previously public issues primarily circulated through mass media and face-to-face forums, the situation is now more fluid and unpredictable. A small issue originating from a citizen's post can quickly escalate into a public discussion, especially when it is amplified by social media user comments, reposts, or additional narratives that may be inaccurate or lacking reliable data. In this situation, the PR of Serang City acts as a strategic communications manager capable of understanding the direction of public opinion while maintaining the government's credibility and image in the digital space.

Based on observations and interviews, researchers found that crisis communication management is relatively consistent once an issue begins to develop into public opinion. As stated by the PR Head,

"We focus on issues that can generate public opinion and plan our messages as quickly as possible and strive to provide the best information". (Informant 2, personal communication, February 11, 2026).

The social media management staff also

echoed this sentiment.

“Everything we post is monitored hourly in case someone requires further information or answers.” (Infomant 1, personal communication, February 11, 2026).

The PR of Serang City begins its work by monitoring public conversations on social media and examining current online media coverage, particularly those discussing the issue being monitored. This activity aims to identify trends and understand what issues are currently discussed by the public, which community groups and/or individuals are disseminating the information, and whether the issue is merely a simple complaint or has generated broad negative sentiment that could hamper the government’s image. This activity can provide an initial assessment of the potential for a developing issue.

When an issue is considered serious and requires PR handling, the Serang City Government will verify it by involving the relevant regional government agencies (OPD) considered directly responsible for handling the issue. For example, for the problem of road user order, the PR verify the problem with the transportation agency and collect relevant data.

“We will coordinate with the relevant OPD to obtain relevant information and data”. (Informant 1, personal communication, February 11, 2026).

This is done to confirm whether the information agrees with the phenomena and data so that the clarification or the official information for the public is relevant.

The biggest challenge in coordinating PR with the OPD is that coordination takes

time and is multi-level, potentially leading to delays in addressing issues and even escalating them due to the faster-moving digital space. This dilemma arises when the public demands immediate clarification, but PR cannot respond immediately because it must first confirm with the relevant OPD. If PR handles matters directly without accurate data and information, it can lead to misinformation or even escalate the issue. Meanwhile, a too-slow response from the government can create a perception of irresponsibility, ultimately leading to distrust.

PR must be able to gather sufficient data in designing messages to deliver to the public. Based on the data obtained, the messages and narratives created by PR should not only be clarifications but also contain accurate information that can reassure the public and restore the government’s image. This strategy demonstrates the role of PR in maintaining a positive government image through credible and more responsive messages to public needs.

Based on the researcher’s observations, the PR of Serang city used social media as the main channel to convey messages and build narratives about government policies to the public with a concise message format easy for the public to understand, either in the form of infographics, short statements, or short videos. This format, besides keeping up with technological developments, is easier for all groups to understand. Digital media consumers tend to respond more quickly to visual messages than to long texts. The use of social media also makes it easier for PR to see how the public

responds to the information presented.

Researchers observed that government PR strives to maintain consistent messaging across all channels. This consistency of messaging extends to all media outlets, including those of OPD and regional leaders. This is crucial because digital audiences tend to be quicker at detecting message contradictions in digital media. If messages are inconsistent between websites and social media, for example, a problem that should have been resolved with clarification can escalate into a crisis of trust in the government. Therefore, internal coordination serves to ensure that the messages conveyed are consistent, ensuring the public perceives the government as consistent.

PR will evaluate public response, including comments, discussion intensity, sentiment direction, and public perception of published messages. This evaluation is part of a routine work process to monitor message flow and public opinion developments on an issue. It demonstrates that the PR department of Serang City has developed crisis communication skills, even if only using simple indicators such as observing the development of the issue and the public's response to the message.

Based on the analysis, the implementation of crisis communication management by the Serang City government's PR department was carried out by transforming and adapting to digital-based public communication patterns. Work steps such as issue monitoring, cross-sector coordination, and designing digital media messages and content are part of the

digital communication work pattern in the crisis communication process. Researchers still found that the messages delivered tended to be reactive because responses came only after an issue had gone viral. Therefore, it can be said that the primary requirement, besides strengthening human resources and speeding up PR responses, is the ability to understand the flow and situation of issues so that the public does not wait for a government response but receives accurate information and certainty of government action on a problem.

In the era of social media, communication crises don't always arise from major events, but often stem from viral citizen complaints, distorted video clips, or public service issues circulating through digital chat groups. This situation requires PR to employ more flexible strategies. The communication strategy of Serang City PR in handling crises in the digital space is fundamentally shaped by communication needs, requiring PR to act quickly. Also, it maintains information consistency and ensure the government's presence in public conversations.

Crises can arise at any time and in any situation. Sometimes, government policies and programs that directly impact the public become hot topics of discussion on social media. Issues that initially begin as citizen complaints about services or those directly affected by government programs can escalate into a crisis of trust. This can occur when narratives constructed by individuals based on their experiences become public narratives and

develop into disappointment and distrust of the government. Issue monitoring, in this case, serves as an early warning for PR to assess whether an issue requires immediate action or further monitoring.

The next PR strategy involves internal coordination between OPDs as the basis for developing messages. This is done to address the lack of direct technical data, allowing PR to formulate clarification after obtaining information from relevant agencies or units. Coordination is carried out to verify the problem in detail, including the chronology of events, and the actions taken by the government. This demonstrates that the crisis communication process within government involves more than one party with multiple levels of bureaucracy. Every statement, clarification, message, and information conveyed on behalf of the government must be legitimated by an institution relevant to the ongoing issue. Furthermore, coordination also serves to unify and align perceptions within the government, resulting in a unified narrative that will be conveyed to the public, as the public can easily detect inconsistencies in messages conveyed through digital media.

The results of coordination between PR and OPD are then used to create clarification messages based on data and facts to convince the public that the government takes concrete action. Therefore, the focus of PR work is not only on conveying information to the public but also on managing public perception of the government and maintaining a positive image

of the government.

The PR of Serang City employs a rapid information dissemination strategy through official social media channels. The study revealed that social media was chosen because of its direct nature and allows the government to disseminate information without the lengthy process of print media or conventional reporting procedures. Researchers also found that PR presented information through content in social media, such as infographics, short videos, regularly uploaded documentation of government activities, and short press releases in text format. Visual content is an important approach because digital audiences tend to respond more quickly to information presented concisely and easily. This strategy aims to enable government messages to compete with viral content, which is often more emotional and sensational.

Furthermore, the PR communication strategies are evident in efforts to strengthen framing through positive narratives. In some issues that potentially damage the government's image, PR officers not only provide clarification but also insert information about relevant government programs or actions. For example, when issues relate to public services, PR officers attempt to portray the government as making improvements or evaluating services. This strategy demonstrates that PR attempts to shift the public's focus toward solutions. In crisis communications, this approach is often used to maintain an institution's reputation to ensure the public witness the improvements.

Another important strategy is leveraging relationships with local and online media. The PR of Serang City continues to utilize press releases and media collaborations as a means of expanding the reach of information. Local media are seen as having significant influence because they remain the primary source of information for certain groups of people. In crisis situations, media releases are often used to reinforce government messages, ensuring they are not confined to official social media accounts but also appear in more formal, credible news outlets. In this way, PR officers strive to build legitimacy through third parties, preventing government messages from being perceived as one-sided claims.

Interestingly, the study also found that PR employs a selective response strategy when addressing certain issues. Not all issues are addressed directly in the public sphere. In some cases, PR chooses to delay responses while ensuring the available data is truly valid. This strategy is used when they are facing a sensitive issue or one with potential legal or political consequences. This strategy can create the impression that the government is too silent. Delayed responses in the digital space are often interpreted as unpreparedness, and can even be interpreted as justification for what happened. Therefore, a selective response must be balanced with appropriate time management to prevent the crisis from escalating further.

Overall, the PR communication strategy of Serang City demonstrates that the local government has attempted to follow modern,

digital-based crisis communication patterns. Issue monitoring, internal coordination, developing key messages, rapid dissemination through social media, strengthening framing, and collaborating with online media are the main strategies employed. However, it tends to position the government as a one-way information provider. However, the nature of digital communication demands an interactive and dialogical approach, particularly in responding to public comments or building a more participatory communication space. Thus, existing strategies need to be continuously strengthened, not only in terms of publication speed, but also in terms of public engagement so that crisis communication does not stop at clarification.

The PR of Serang City Government has adopted digital communication, but it still faces several complex issues and obstacles. These challenges stem not only from internal factors but also from the greatest challenge: controlling the flow of public opinion. Therefore, the success of local government crisis communications carried out by PR does not lie in the message delivered but in how they can control opinion and build public trust.

The main obstacle faced the PR is the lack of dedicated staff to handle and manage digital communications.

“The limited number of media management resources is a major obstacle in handling communication crises, in addition to multi-level coordination in decision-making.” (Informant 2, personal communication, February 11, 2026).

Limited human resources cause delays in the flow of information in responding to emerging issues and shaping public opinion. The crisis communication process requires competent PR staff with the ability to work and think quickly, from monitoring issues, designing messages, designing content, composing message narratives, to responding to public opinion. Researchers found that the workload of the Serang City PR exceeded the number of available personnel, leading to the involvement of interns or other parties in handling public information. Researchers believe this effort is not the main solution because neither interns nor third parties can directly respond to opinions but must coordinate with the PR staff responsible for handling the messages and information. Consequently, message distribution remains slow compared to the rapid development of public opinion on digital media.

In some situations, PR must be able to predict whether an issue will temporarily cease to be a topic of conversation or develop into a growing reputational crisis. This is especially true when existing issues move through dynamic platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, or WhatsApp groups, each of which has its own distribution patterns and audiences.

In addition to human resources, research also identified obstacles in the aspect of SOPs for digital crisis communications, which are not yet fully robust and structured. Although PR has a specific work pattern when an issue arises, this mechanism has not yet become a clear, standard

system. In some cases, the crisis management process is highly dependent on internal situations and decisions that are conditional. As a result, the government's response to a particular issue can vary depending on who is handling it, the extent of public pressure, or how quickly technical information is obtained from the OPD. When SOPs are not systematically implemented, PR is more likely to fall into a reactive work pattern, which is responding after an issue goes viral rather than anticipating it from the start.

Another significant obstacle is the inability of cross-OPD coordination to always occur quickly. Within the regional government structure, PR is often in a position that requires data from technical agencies. When issues relate to public services, development, social policy, or administrative matters, PR must coordinate to verify facts and chronology. However, research shows that this process often takes time because each OPD has its own internal mechanisms. Meanwhile, the digital space does not tolerate delays. When the government has not issued a clarification, the public tends to fill the information gap with speculation, assumptions, and even accusations. In this context, slow coordination is not only an administrative obstacle but can also be a trigger for a worsening communication crisis.

The study also found obstacles in the form of a lack of synchronization of information between agencies. In some cases, the information received by PR officers from a certain OPD did not always align with the narrative developing

on the ground. This situation requires them to work more carefully, as differing versions of information can lead to public confusion. When the public encounters changing or inconsistent government statements, public trust can erode, even though the government's initial goal was to suppress the issue. This lack of synchronization demonstrates that government crisis communication requires solid internal management to ensure that the messages delivered are truly unified.

The most challenging obstacle of this study was the high flow of disinformation and hoaxes in the digital space.

"Our challenge now is not only to provide information, but also to correct information that has already circulated. Sometimes government clarifications lag behind viral posts on social media, so we must ensure official information reaches the public promptly to avoid misinformation". (Informant 1, personal communication, February 11, 2026).

In some cases, the issues that developed were no longer simply public criticism, but rather false information deliberately spread to create negative perceptions. Hoaxes typically spread through incomplete pieces of information, distorted images, or provocative narratives. The biggest challenge with hoaxes lies not only in their content but also in their speed. Once a hoax has spread widely, official government clarifications often lag behind. In fact, in certain situations, government clarifications aren't always trusted because the public has already accepted the narrative constructed by others. This complicates government crisis

communications, as PR is not only faced with issues of fact but also with trust.

In addition to hoaxes, low digital literacy among certain community is also a great challenge. Not everyone is accustomed to verifying information sources before re-disseminating it. As a result, information that is not necessarily accurate can easily develop into widespread public opinion. This situation increases PR burden, as the government should educate the public to be more critical of digital information. However, in practice, public education is not achieved instantly, as digital literacy is a long-term process that requires the involvement of many parties.

The next obstacle relates to the government's unequal communication reach. While official regional government accounts are the primary channels for disseminating information, not everyone follows or accesses these channels. Most people instead receive information from chat groups, unofficial accounts, or local influencers with broader reach. As a result, published government clarifications do not always immediately reach the groups affected by the issue. This situation requires the government to work harder to ensure that official messages are disseminated widely, rather than just within the circle of followers of official accounts.

Based on the findings, the researchers concluded that the PR of Serang City government consistently strives to provide information and communicate policies using social media as a digital information medium. The official Instagram and TikTok accounts of the Serang

City government, as well as the personal accounts of regional leaders, are used to enhance the image and public trust in the government. Crisis communication management through social media involves several stages, including monitoring emerging issues on social media, coordinating with relevant OPDs to ensure the accuracy of information and developing strategies, planning, and designing messages to counter these issues, utilizing official local government accounts to provide clarification and public information, and collaborating with influencers to enhance public image and trust, control the flow of information, and prevent issues from escalating into a deeper crisis.

This research also shows that the process of receiving information during a crisis through digital communication, such as social media, can influence public attitudes and emotions in the digital space. Social media users respond to issues not only based on facts but also on their personal experiences and perceptions of government services. These personal opinions ultimately become public opinion. Public dissatisfaction with the government sometimes leads to public rejection when the government issues public clarifications. This demonstrates that crisis communication is not merely about providing information and clarification; it requires an empathetic approach.

Therefore, the obstacles of crisis communication in the PR of Serang City are not solely technical; they originate from institutional factors and the social dynamics of the community involved in the digital

communication process, including within the digital community (social media users). Limited human resources for competent managers, suboptimal SOPs, slow coordination between local government agencies, asynchronous information, and from it hoax messages are the main obstacles in crisis management faced by the Serang City PR. In addition to internal obstacles, the Serang City Government also faces external obstacles in the form of low digital literacy among the community, which makes them vulnerable to being disrupted by unreliable information.

The findings of this study indicate that the PR of Serang City Government utilizes digital media, specifically social media, as its primary means for crisis communication. The transformation undertaken aims to keep pace with and adapt to developments in communication technology, which enables strategic issues relevant to the public to be communicated more quickly and openly through interactions among social media users.

Researchers revealed that crises can originate from public complaints, viral posts, or even information that spreads widely among the public. PR officers must be careful in conveying messages to maintain the government's image. It requires an active role of PR in educating the public about media literacy, monitoring the flow of information, and interpreting the direction of public discourse. These findings support the argument of Coombs (2026) that crises in the digital era develop more rapidly and are more difficult to control due to the active and open

role of public participation in shaping crisis narratives in the media.

Researchers also found that PR identifies issues in public discourse to provide an early warning system that allows governments to detect potential crises before they escalate and become increasingly difficult to control. This finding reinforces the argument of Veil et al., (2011) that social media often serve as platforms for early crisis detection because citizens express their dissatisfaction more quickly and openly in digital spaces.

The PR of a government faces challenges, particularly in terms of the speed of responding to public opinion. Clarification is sometimes perceived as delayed due to the structured and time-consuming internal coordination and verification process. However, internal verification is undeniably necessary for obtaining accurate information and determining effective messaging. However, hierarchical bureaucracy acts as a hindering factor, resulting in delays in the delivery of messages, information, and clarifications, creating speculations and misperceptions among the public. It aligns with the findings of MacKay et al. (2021) that delays in crisis communication often create information gaps that allow speculation and misinformation to flourish.

Referring to SCCT, the response of Serang city PR largely emphasized factual clarifications and explanations to manage public perception. This finding supports Coombs' (2026) assertion that government crisis communication tends to focus on administrative explanations,

appearing more defensive to public concerns. The researchers observed that the PR provided factual clarifications through social media accounts, which may have helped mitigate rumors, but it did not fully address public expectations.

Holland et al. (2021) stated that the use of social media as a primary crisis communication channel reflects the logic of SMCC, which allows organizations to communicate directly with the public and quickly disseminate official information. However, findings indicate that communication patterns remain largely one-way, with government social media accounts serving as a medium for information and clarification, not a space for public dialogue. This situation contradicts the dialogic communication suggested by Osborne (2020) that governments should foster.

The challenge facing governments is the rapid spread of disinformation and hoaxes in the digital environment. It aligns with the findings of Schwaderer (2025) that false narratives often circulate faster than official government clarifications because they trigger stronger emotional reactions among audiences. As a result, government PR often finds itself in a reactive position, constantly attempting to correct emerging issues and attract public attention, but ultimately unable to keep up with the dynamics of digital communication, which tends to be faster.

Strengthening local government crisis communications is not simply about adopting digital platforms to convey information and

becoming the primary medium for maintaining and building a positive image. It also requires efforts to strengthen institutional readiness, including clear SOPs of crisis communications, increased human resource capacity, and more effective inter-agency coordination to enable a fast and credible response.

CONCLUSION

This study addressed the three research questions concerning crisis communication management implemented by the PR of Serang City Government in the digital media era. The implementation of crisis communication management has adapted to the characteristics of digital communication. PR begins the crisis management process by monitoring issues circulating on social media and online news, followed by verifying information through coordination with the relevant OPD. The verified information is then used to develop communication messages disseminated through the official social media accounts and website. These activities demonstrate that digital media have become the primary platform for delivering official information and maintaining public trust during crisis.

Second, the study found that the communication strategies employed emphasize issue monitoring, inter-agency coordination, message consistency, rapid dissemination of information through digital platforms, and collaboration with local media to strengthen the credibility of government messages. However,

the communication pattern remains largely focused on disseminating information rather than fostering two-way interaction with the public.

Third, the findings reveal that the effectiveness of crisis communication is influenced by several internal and external challenges. Internally, limited human resources, the absence of a comprehensive SOP of digital crisis communication, and delays in coordination and information synchronization among government agencies reduce the speed of the government's response. Externally, the rapid spread of hoaxes and disinformation, combined with varying levels of digital literacy among the public, causes difficulty for official information to compete with misinformation circulating on social media.

Based on these findings, this study recommends that the Serang City Government strengthen the institutional capacity of its PR unit by improving digital communication competencies and increasing the availability of personnel dedicated to crisis communication. Besides, the government should establish a comprehensive SOP of digital crisis communication to ensure faster, more coordinated, and more consistent responses across government agencies. Furthermore, emphasis should be placed on two-way communication with citizens through digital platforms to build sustainable public engagement and trust. Future research is encouraged to examine public perceptions of government crisis communication or compare

crisis communication practices across different local governments.

Acknowledgments: The author would like to thank the PR staff of Serang City who were willing to assist in carrying out the research by providing the required data.

Author contributions: “Conceptualization, DWS and RYS.; methodology, RF.; software, MNA and RYS.; validation, DWS., RYS and RF.; formal analysis, MNA.; investigation, RYS and RF.; resources, DWS and RYS.; data curation, RF.; writing—original draft preparation, RYS.; writing—review and editing, RYS.; visualization, RYS.; supervision, DWS.; project administration, RF.; funding acquisition, DWS, RYS and RF. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.”

AI declaration: The authors declare that they used Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools upon writing this manuscript, but kept the editing to less than 20%, and affirm that all contents and analysis results are accountable.

Ethical clearance: The authors have obtained approval from all parties involved, both individuals and groups, to fulfill the data and information on research results used in this research.

Data Availability Statement: The data is available by request to the author.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

REFERENCES

- Afrilia, A. M., Rhizky, D. P., Putri, W. E., & Ratnasari, E. (2023). The digital competence of government public relations officer in Magelang City. *P^{RO}fesi Humas*, 7(2), 215-233. <https://doi.org/10.24198/prh.v7i2.43146>
- Aji, T. W., Hastjarjo, S., & Hermawati, T. (2026). A systematic literature review and bibliometric analysis of crisis communication in digital media (2015–2025): Mapping trends and intellectual structures. *Jurnal Audiens*, 7(1). <https://doi.org/10.18196/jas.v7i.732>
- Anagusti, T. T., Ayuningtyas, F., & Venus, A. (2024). Crisis communication strategy in the digital era at the ministry of finance of the Republic of Indonesia’s directorate general of taxes. *Jurnal Riset Komunikasi (JURKOM)*, 7(1), 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.38194/jurkom.v7i1.914>
- Bachri, A. S., Muqsith, M. A., & Tayibnafis, R. G. (2026). How are government public relations addressed in existing and future research?. *P^{RO}fesi Humas*, 10(2), 257-281. <https://doi.org/10.24198/prh.v10i2.67759>
- Breakwell, G. M. (2020). Mistrust, uncertainty and health risks. *Contemporary Social Science*, 15(5), 504–516. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21582041.2020.1804070>
- Coombs, T. (2026). *Ongoing crisis communication: Planning, managing, and responding*. United States: SAGE Publications, Incorporated.
- Cornelissen, J. P. (2020). *Corporate Communication: A Guide to Theory and Practice*. United Kingdom: SAGE Publications
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design : Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. SAGE Publications Inc
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.). (2018). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research (5th ed.)*. SAGE Publications

- Holland, D., Seltzer, T., & Kochigina, A. (2021). Practicing transparency in a crisis: Examining the combined effects of crisis type, response, and message transparency on organizational perceptions. *Public relations review*, 47(2). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2021.102017>
- Iqbal, M. F., Labolo, M., & Masrich, A. (2026). Effectiveness of the preparation of the regional governance implementation report (lppd) through coordination among regional apparatuses in tangerang regency in 2023. *Jurnal Ilmiah Multidisiplin Indonesia (JIM-ID)*, 5(01), 25-42. <https://ejournal.seaninstitute.or.id/index.php/esaprom/article/view/7935>
- Li, Y., Chandra, Y., & Fan, Y. (2021). Unpacking government social media messaging strategies during the COVID-19 pandemic in China. *Policy & Internet*, 13(4), 538–560. <https://doi.org/10.1002/poi3.282>.
- Machsunah, U., Triyuda, P., & Novita, L. (2026). Crisis navigation in the era of disruption: An exploration of situational crisis communication Theory (SCCT) Strategies in Public Relations of the West Java Provincial DPRD. *Jurnal Polisci*, 3(3), 196-205. <https://doi.org/10.62885/polisci.v3i3.1023>
- MacKay, M., Colangeli, T., Gillis, D., McWhirter, J., & Papadopoulos, A. (2021). Examining social media crisis communication during the early stages of COVID-19. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(15), 7986. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18157986>
- Mhagama, P. (2015). *Development journalism and community radio in Malawi*. Disertasi. University of Leicester.
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (2018). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook*. United Kingdom: SAGE Publications.
- Nurjanah, A., Hesti, S., & Aliagan, I. Z. (2025). Crisis communication through government social media (@ Btn_Gn_Rinjani) in handling the Brazilian Tourist accident on mount Rinjani. *ASPIRATION Journal*, 6(2), 190-212. <https://doi.org/10.56353/aspiration.v6i2.114>
- Osborne, S. P. (2020). *Public Service Logic*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003009153>
- Rasyid, R. S. (2025). The influence of government communication intensity and the role of mass media regarding net zero emission on motorcyclist media literacy in Serang City. *In Proceeding of International Conference on Public Administration and Social Sciences*, 1(1). <https://jurnal.untirta.ac.id/index.php/ICoPASS/article/viewFile/29774/14299>
- Schwaderer, C. (2025). *When crisis conversations converge: How government messaging and online sense-making align during crises*. *Risk, Hazards & Crisis in Public Policy*, 16(4), e70042. <https://doi.org/10.1002/rhc3.70042>
- Taylor, M., & Kent, M. L. (2014). Dialogic engagement: Clarifying foundational

- concepts. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 26(5), 384–398. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1062726X.2014.956106>
- Tresnoati, W. S. (2026). 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: English and Indonesian. *Priviet Social Sciences Journal*, 6(2), 436-447. <https://doi.org/10.55942/pssj.v6i2.1497>
- Ulmer, R. R., Sellnow, T. L., & Seeger, M. W. (2018). *Effective crisis communication: Moving from crisis to opportunity (4th ed.)*. Sage
- Veil, S. R., Buehner, T., & Palenchar, M. J. (2011). A work-in-process literature review: Incorporating social media in risk and crisis communication. *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management*, 19(2), 110–122. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5973.2011.00639>
- Yulianti, W., & Boer, R. F. (2020). Manajemen krisis public relations dalam menangani penolakan imunisasi measles rubella. *PRofesi Humas*, 4(2), 290-311. <https://doi.org/10.24198/prh.v4i2.23700>
- Yin, R. K. (2017). *Case study research and applications design and methods (SIXTH)*. SAGE Publications Inc