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INNOVATIVE STRATEGY OF THE HEAD OF SASANA JAYA MONASTERY IN CRISIS MANAGEMENT

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Abstract

The head of The Sasana Jaya Buddhist Monastery manages all threats, makes quick decisions, and monitors the development of the crisis. This study aims to describe the innovative strategies of the monastery's head in facing health, social, economic, spiritual, and educational challenges as a form of crisis management in response to COVID-19. This research is qualitative and employs a case study method. Data collection uses observation, interview, and documentation techniques. The validity of the data is ensured through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability tests. Data analysis involves data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Strategies in the social sector include the distribution of basic necessities, masks, and vitamins. Innovative strategies in the economic field include fundraising through kathina, pattidana, and puja pelita activities to maintain the operation and existence of the monastery. Educational innovation is achieved through online learning media via WhatsApp groups. The aspect of faith is reinforced through the recitation of the Ratana Sutta during every puja.

Keywords

Leadership, Innovative Strategy, Crisis Management

INTRODUCTION

Four years ago, the world was shocked by the Covid-19 pandemic. The history of this emergence began with epidemiological data showing 66% of patients were related to or exposed to one *seafood* market or *live market* in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China (Huang, et.al., 2020). Yuliana (2020) explained that covid-19 is a new viral infection that resulted in the infection of 90,308 people as of 2 March 2020. As reported in the Kompas.tv article (12/03/2020) the covid-19 or coronavirus outbreak was designated by WHO on 11 March 2020 as a pandemic. The reason for determining the status of this pandemic is due to the rapid and wide spread to areas far from the outbreak.

Plague or disease in Buddhism is part of the risk of birth. A person who is born will experience a cycle of old age, illness and death. *Dhammapada, Jarā (XI: 147) Passa cittakatam bimbam, Arukāyam samussitam. Āturam bahusaṅkappam, Yassa natthi dhuvaṃ ṭhiti* means look at this beautiful body, many people consider it very precious and take great care of it. But actually this body is impermanent, full of wounds, supported by a bunch of bones and easily

attacked by disease. However, it is not wise to deal with illnesses only by praying and reading scriptures. Because not all diseases arise due to bad karma, but can also arise due to climate, food and thoughts. In Abhidhammatasangaha (2005) there are four things that cause the onset of rupa namely Actions (*Kamma*), Thoughts (*Citta*), Temperature (*Uttu*) and Food (*Ahara*). One can minimise the risk of contracting covid-19 by maintaining these four things.

Effective leadership is key in crisis management. Mitroff (1994) highlights the importance of leaders who can make quick and appropriate decisions in crisis situations, as well as the ability to communicate clearly and effectively. Even though this situation is a tough step for the leader in responding to the crisis, the organisation must *survive* in various conditions, which requires the strategic role of the leader in the decision-making process. Leadership helps members resolve crises through strong decisions and timely decision-making Zhuravsky (2015).

The figure of a leader in a Buddhist community cannot be separated from the role of the chairperson who is a role model, source of information, driver and controller for the organisation. For Buddhists in rural areas, the figure of the chief tends to be upheld and respected. The chief or leader has a place in the hearts of the people so that often in every occasion of religious ceremonies, the figure becomes the leader of Buddhist religious rituals in charge of providing advice as provisions or guidelines for Buddhists in living their daily lives.

Based on data from jatim.kemenag.go.id, the number of religious adherents by district/city in 2014, the Ministry of Religious Affairs of East Java Province, Blitar is the area that has the third rank with the largest number of Buddhists. Buddhists in Blitar Regency are quite active in various national level organisations. Sasana Jaya Buddhist Monastery which is located in Buneng Village, Blitar Regency. The religious activities that take place at Sasana Jaya Buddhist Monastery are supported by various parties. Local Buddhists support various religious activities such as the celebration of Buddhist holidays, food funds for *sangha* members, social gatherings, special youth puja bakti, anjangsana and Buddhist Sunday school. Meanwhile, some Buddhists from outside the city often become donors. However, since the pandemic, routine activities of Buddhists from various regions cannot be carried out optimally. So it takes a role, style and strategy in maintaining the enthusiasm of the community.

Leadership is an interesting theme to discuss and research in various organisations. Leadership in organisations is an integral part of the management process where *leading is one* of the management functions. Yukl (2017) defines leadership as a process of influencing others to agree and understand a task and how to perform that task, as well as the process of facilitating individual and group efforts to achieve common goals. This opinion is in line with Robbins & Judge (2017) who reviewed leadership as an ability. Terry & Rue (2019) explain leadership is a natural growth of people organised for a purpose in a group.

According to Vietzal, Bahtiar & Amar (2013: 21) said a leader in an organisation must have criteria, namely: 1) Influence; a leader is a person who has people who support him who also raise the name of the leader. 2) *Power*; a leader is generally followed by others because he has power that makes others respect his existence. 3) Authority; the right given to the leader to determine a decision in implementing a matter / policy. 4) Followers; a leader who has influence, power and authority cannot be said to be a leader if he does not have followers who are behind him who give support to follow what the leader says.

Leaders motivate and guide the behaviour of members to fulfil the plans and work designed by the leader. Leaders have the most important and most difficult leadership responsibilities when it comes to leading organisational change (Yukl, 2017). Ten leader roles according to Mintzberg relate to the interpersonal behaviour of managers, namely leaders, liaisons and symbols. Three roles relate to behaviour as information processors including monitors, disseminators, and spokespersons. Four roles relate to decision-making behaviours including entrepreneur, coping with distractions, resource allocator and negotiator.

Formal leaders are leaders who occupy formal leadership positions or positions in a formal organisation established by law or state regulations or regulations of an agency, while informal leaders are leaders who do not occupy formal organisational positions in the social system, but have influence on members of the social system (Wirawan, 2014: 9). In the Digha Nikaya (Walshe, 2009: 407-408) Cakkavati Sihanada Sutta explained about 12 obligations of a leader or king, namely: 1). Live in truth, 2). Be devoted, respectful and prostrate to the truth, 3). Praise the truth, 4). Purify yourself with the truth, 5). Make yourself a banner of righteousness, 6). Take good care of family, clergy and animals, 7). Do not let evil prevail in the kingdom, 8). Make righteousness a guest, 9). Give funds to the poor, 10). Always come to see Samana, 11). Listen to the Dhamma attentively, 12). Discourage the people from doing evil and encourage them to do good.

The head of the monastery is *informal leadership*. *Leadership* is not formal because of the community's recognition of a person's ability to exercise leadership Soekanto (2003: 318). This leadership has a scope without official boundaries, because such leadership is based on public recognition and trust. The abbot as a religious figure plays an important role in creating public opinion or healthy public opinion.

Leadership style is the behaviour or method chosen and used by the leader in influencing the thoughts, feelings, attitudes and behaviour of subordinate organisational members (Nawawi, 2003). a. Leadership Contingency Theory Fielder's contingency model (Robbins 2017) identifies that Leadership Style has a key factor in leadership success, namely the basic individual leadership style. If a situation requires a leader to be task-orientated and the person in the leadership position is relationship-orientated, either the situation must be modified or the leader must be replaced to achieve optimal effectiveness. Fielder (Robbins 2017) identified three contingency or situational dimensions which include: a)

Leader-member relationship is the degree of confidence, trust and respect that members have in the dreamer. b) Task structure is the circumstances under which job assignments are proceduralised (i.e., structured or unstructured). c) Positional power is the degree of influence a leader has over power variables such as hiring, firing, discipline, promotion and salary increases. In these three variables Fiedler states that the better the relationship between the leader and the members, the higher the work is structured, and the stronger the positional power, the more control the leader has.

Robert House in Robbins (2017) combines four main leadership types or styles, namely: 1) Directive leadership. This style is similar to the authoritarian leader style of Lippitt and White. Subordinates know exactly what is expected and the leader provides specific direction. There is no participation from subordinates. 2) Supportive leadership. This leadership style has a friendly demeanour, is approachable and shows genuine concern for subordinates. 3) Participative leadership. The leader solicits and uses suggestions from subordinates, but still makes decisions. 4) Achievement-orientated leadership. Leaders set goals that challenge subordinates to show confidence to achieve goals and have better performance.

Robbins (2017) identified several types of leadership styles, including: 1) Charismatic leadership style where followers are encouraged by heroic or extraordinary leadership abilities when observing certain leader behaviours. There are five main characteristics of charismatic leaders: a. Vision and articulation. having a vision aimed at idealised goals that hope for a better future than the status quo, and being able to clarify the importance of the vision that others can understand. b. Personal risk. Charismatic leaders are willing to take high personal risks, bear great costs, and engage in self-sacrifice to achieve the vision. c. Sensitive to the environment, realistically assessing environmental constraints and the resources needed to make changes. d. Sensitivity to followers' needs. Sensitivity to followers' needs. Charismatic leaders are perceptive (very understanding) of others' abilities and responsive to needs and feelings. e. Unconventional behaviour. Charismatic leaders engage in behaviours that are considered new and counter to the norm. 2) Transformational Leadership style identifies that leaders who inspire their followers to go beyond self-interest and who have the ability to have a profound and extraordinary influence on their followers. 3) Authentic Leadership Style identifies leaders who know who they are, what they believe and value, and act on those values and beliefs openly and honestly. The followers will consider being an ethical person. Authentic leadership is a promising way to think about ethics and trust in leadership because it focuses on the moral aspects of the leader. 4) Servant Leadership style is characterised by going beyond the leader's own interests and will focus on opportunities to help followers grow and develop. Characteristics of servant leaders: listening, empathising, persuading, accepting service, and actively developing the potential of their followers.

The study of crisis management originated from large-scale industrial and environmental disasters in the 1980s (Shrivastava, 1988). According to research by Seeger, M. W.; Sellnow, T. L.; Ulmer (1998) there are three elements that are common in crises: (a) a threat to the organisation, (b) an element of surprise, and (c) a short decision time. Venette (2003) argues that a crisis is a transformation process in which the old system cannot be sustained. Therefore, the defining quality of all four is the need for change. If change is not required, the event can be more accurately described as a failure or incident. On the other hand, according to Howitt and Leonard (Ahmad, 2020) to deal with such situations, where the unfamiliarity and uncertainty of the end of the crisis, leaders of leaders must be able to improvise.

Fink (1986) states that a crisis is the instability of a condition caused by changes that are threatening enough, changes that are decisive and threaten the company, both expected and unexpected changes that will provide better results. According to Iriantara (2004), crisis management is just one of the three forms of management response to changes that occur in the organisation's external environment. Crisis management is based on how to deal with the crisis (*crisis bargaining and negotiation*), making decisions in times of crisis (*crisis decision making*), and monitoring the development of the crisis (*crisis dynamics*). Management is responsible for finding a solution to the crisis that arises by using possible crisis management strategies.

Management is a process of planning, organising, leading and controlling work activities efficiently and effectively with and through other people (Hery, 2018: 7-8). Meanwhile, crisis is defined by Kriyantono (2018: 198-204) as a specific event that is unexpected but unavoidable that can cause panic, shock and even uncertainty of information that can have positive or negative impacts. So it can be concluded that crisis management is an activity or process of planning, organising, directing and controlling people and other resources effectively and efficiently to deal with a crisis so that it can be resolved and have a positive impact on the institution.

Based on this opinion, it can be seen that crisis management is an effort to control organisational resources to minimise crises that can harm and threaten the existence of an organisation by managing all spontaneous threats, making decisions in a short time and monitoring the development of the crisis. Furthermore, according to Bayazit, Z.D., Cengel O., Tepe F.F (2003) which states that there are three types of management used to overcome crises in organisations, namely pre-crisis, crisis and post-crisis management. Crises do not just happen. Crisis goes through a special process or stage. Kriyantono (in Ulfa, Suadnyana & Kusnia, 2019: 97) describes it into three stages, namely: (1) *Pre-Crisis*, which is when signs of a crisis begin to appear and if management fails to prevent or prepare, this stage can turn into a crisis stage; (2) *Acute Crisis*, which is when management cannot cope with the situation that occurs so that the situation spreads widely outside the organisation; and (3) *Post-Crisis*,

which is when the crisis has accumulated and the organisation must try to recover from all the consequences caused by the crisis.

Crises that hit an organisation come in stages. According to Steven Fink (1986), the stages of the crisis or known as the anatomy of the crisis are divided into four stages, namely: a) Prodromal Crisis Stage at this stage the crisis is still often forgotten and not felt because the organisation is still running as usual. The symptoms are clear, vague and some are not even visible. b) Acute Crisis Stage, the acute stage is a crisis pattern where problems begin to surface. This stage usually occurs due to management's inattention to responding to the prodroma stage. c) Chronic Crisis Stage, this stage is referred to as the *recovery* or *self-analysis* stage, d) Resolution Crisis Stage (Healing) This stage is the healing stage (recovering) and the last stage of the four stages of the crisis.

METHODS

This research is a type of qualitative research with a case study approach that aims to explore and understand the phenomena that occur in Buddhist monasteries in Selorejo Sasana Subdistrict, Blitar Regency, East Java Province. The case study approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore in depth the context, processes, and dynamics that exist in the research location (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Moleong, 2014). The Selorejo Sasana Sub-district Buddhist Monastery became the locus of this research because it has unique characteristics that are relevant to the research objectives. The research was conducted in 2020 when the covid-19 pandemic began.

In order to obtain comprehensive data, this research utilises three main data collection techniques: observation, interviews and documentation. The observation technique allowed the researcher to directly observe the activities and interactions taking place at the temple. Interviews were conducted with various key informants, including temple leaders, administrators, and community members, to gain in-depth perspectives on the role of the temple. Documentation involved collecting various relevant documents and records, such as activity reports, photographs, and other archives (Moleong, 2014). To ensure data validity, this study applied four tests of validity: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The credibility test was carried out by triangulating data, namely comparing information from various sources and data collection techniques. Transferability is achieved by providing a detailed description of the research context so that the findings can be applied to other similar contexts. Dependability and confirmability are maintained through audit trails, namely systematic recording and storage of data so that it can be audited by other parties (Sugiyono, 2009). Data analysis in this study used the Miles and Huberman analysis pattern, which includes four stages: data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing or verification (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In the data collection stage, researchers collected information from various sources. The data that has

been collected is then reduced or selected to find the core or main themes that are relevant. The data that has been reduced is then presented in narrative, matrix, or graph form to facilitate understanding. The final stage is conclusion drawing, where the researcher identifies patterns, relationships, or concepts that emerge from the analysed data. With this approach, the research is expected to provide a comprehensive picture of the role and function of the Selorejo Sasana Sub-district Buddhist Vihara in its community, as well as its contribution to social, spiritual, and educational life in Blitar Regency.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Role of Leaders in Manajemen Crisis

The head of the monastery in early 2020 still did not suspect that covid-19 had the opportunity to disrupt the existence of the Sasana Jaya Buddhist Monastery organisation. This is in accordance with Fink's (1986) opinion where the prodromal crisis stage where the crisis appears faintly. Shock response with dramatic changes caused by the external environment of the organisation that have a serious impact on organizational change. However, the chairman accepts this reality wisely, trying to face and minimise the risks due to Covid-19. The chairman carries out the role of leader as Mintzberg's opinion (in Yukl, 2017) outlines ten managerial roles and is grouped into three categories, namely: interpersonal role, information role, and decision role. Leaders must act as *figureheads*, leaders, and liaisons in crisis situations.

The role of the chairperson is evident in various religious and social activities. The chairman as a *role model* for Buddhists participates in giving examples of the use of masks in various activities. The Buddhist leader serves as a role model so that devotees follow the behaviour patterns of figures who are considered leaders. The Buddhist leader as a *figurehead* builds a positive *image* in supporting various government programmes to prevent transmission.

The role of the chairman who doubles as the administrator of Sasana Jaya Buddhist monastery also plays an important role in re-energising Buddhist religious activities. The chairman accommodates the aspirations of devotees who feel their spiritual needs are not met because they are not allowed to worship together. Brooks et al (2020) concluded that quarantine has a significant impact on individual mental health with the emergence of psychological stress such as anxiety and depression. The strategy to overcome this condition is for the chairman to be a good listener to the devotees who expect the implementation of routine puja bakti activities and reading *parittas* for the sick to return. In this case, the Chairman and Romo/Ramani who are also the leaders of religious rituals provide new enthusiasm for the desperate devotees, treating the longing for religious rituals to strengthen faith in the Buddha Dhamma (*Saddha*). The Chairman attending the visit for the sick devotees is also the role of the leader as a motivator for the devotees to obtain healing and health by directing positive thoughts through the recitation of the *paritta*.

The chairman as a disseminator of information always tries to participate in various socialisations held by various trusted parties, the chairman is present, listening to development information about covid-19 from various kinds of information media. Furthermore, the chairman campaigns for health protocols based on information and knowledge about covid-19 obtained from trusted sources. The implementation of health protocols in the *new normal* era is carried out in various types of religious and social activities. The Buddhist leader, apart from acting as a *disseminator*, also participates in continuous monitoring regarding the effectiveness of the implementation of health protocols and appeals to Buddhists.

Initially, the congregation was prevented from conducting collective worship at the monastery. The chairman accommodates all the aspirations of the people so that the puja bakti is held again. *Decisional roles* or decision-making roles are presented by the chairman in the negotiation process with the covid-19 task force. Peleckis (2016) emphasises the importance of assessing negotiating power to create and implement effective strategies. The chairman's negotiations were carried out by attaching supporting documents that could strengthen the reasons why Buddhist religious activities could take place safely. The chairman's role as a negotiator runs smoothly so that permits related to religious activities can take place properly in accordance with the expectations of the organisation's members and for the existence of the organisation).

Leadership Style in Crisis Management

Fiedler's (1967) contingency model states that effective group performance depends on the right match between the leader's style and how much the situation gives the leader control. The chairperson's leadership style in crisis management was autocratic directive. Autocratic directive leadership was triggered by demands from the covid-19 task force, sub-district head, military and village officials for the implementation of health protocols. The implementation of health protocols in the Buddhist community is strictly implemented, especially when carrying out religious activities that allow mass gatherings. The chairman as the *first-line manager* emphasises to the congregation to follow the guidelines for implementing religious activities in the era of adaptation to new habits. According to Mintzberg (1980) the *first-line* has a very important role in the organisation. Policies that have been determined by the government are implemented by the chairman. The chairman also determines the number of people who are allowed to attend a particular activity.

Anxiety about the risk of covid-19 transmission causes the chairperson to be protective of the safety of the elderly. This is because the risk of transmission is more vulnerable in the elderly and comorbid categories. The leader restricts the number of devotees, cancels the programme of picking up elderly devotees, and provides *washbasins*, handwashing soap and orders one monastery guard to always *standby* near the entrance to maintain a conducive, safe and comfortable atmosphere for guests and devotees who come.

These efforts are a form of compassion (*karuna*) in serving the community as well as a form of devotion to the elderly.

The chairman builds a good relationship with the congregation based on loving-kindness (*metta*). Devotees who forget their responsibilities in implementing health protocols are always counselled and directed. Devotees who do not bring masks are given masks and still allowed to enter the temple area without safety and minimise the embarrassment of devotees due to forgetfulness. The chairman's *fund in* the form of masks given to devotees is a form of willingness and a process of channeling resources that can be utilised by Buddhists. This provision did not last long because the awareness of the congregation gradually increased. Devotees now realise and discipline themselves without coercion, always wearing masks every time they come to the monastery. The chairman builds relationships with empathy and respects the feelings of members. This is in accordance with the opinion of Robbins (2017) that *consideration* is the extent to which a leader will have a work relationship characterised by mutual trust, respect for subordinates' ideas and respect for members' feelings.

Innovative Strategy in Crisis Management

Financial hardship was felt directly by the majority of Buddhists who worked as farmers, artisans and coolies. This is due to the fall in agricultural produce which before the pandemic was traded and distributed to factories. The chairman has not been able to fully overcome the impact of the pandemic on the economy for the devotees. However, the chairman was able to support the monastery to obtain donors and conduct food distribution at social service activities that have been held three times in 2020. Distribution of one package of basic necessities for one family head. This can certainly help the devotees in the midst of economic difficulties even though it is less than optimal.

Problems from the financial side not only affect the Buddhists but also the monastery's income, but the Buddhist leader organises religious activities that can generate the participation of Buddhists from various regions through three activities, namely *kathina*, *pattidana* and *puja pelita*. a) *Kathina* is one of the Buddhist holidays marked by the end of the vassa period. b) *Pattidana* is an *uja* of service to ancestors as a form of devotion and the last is c) *Puja Pelita*. In this activity the devotees flock to do charity or donate to members of the sangha or monks. b) *Pattidana* is an *uja* of service to ancestors as a form of devotion and the last is c) *Candle puja* is a lamp puja activity where donors donate and have candles that will be placed on the altar. From these three sources of funds the monastery's operations can be fulfilled.

The design of activities is made in accordance with the culture and expectations of the donors. This aims to make donors satisfied, happy and then return to fund with joy. This is a form of positive interaction that is mutually beneficial or *symbiotic mutualism*. Donors as people who give funds are happy when giving up what they have, the monastery also gets help for operations to *survive*.

The abbot and the team also actively participate in the local government's covid-19 prevention programmes. Such as village activities that have been carried out at the home of the local village head. The chairman together with Islamic and Christian religious leaders participated in the Javanese tradition of rejecting bad luck by hitting a rice mortar. In addition, there is 'Kampung Tangguh', a pandemic alert programme at the village level.

The leader's strategy in increasing Buddhist awareness is to provide supporting facilities for the implementation of health protocols by making mandatory hand washing announcements, providing sinks with running water and hand washing soap. There is a monastery employee whose job is to monitor the temperature of devotees who visit the monastery.

The chairperson also supports teachers to create online learning innovations through *whatsapp* group media. Sunday school students are made online learning videos, besides that students are also supported to document various religious activities that have been set. Thus students can be more flexible in managing time in carrying out online learning. The chairman's new innovation to support the congregation to increase the faith (*saddha*) of the congregation through the *palivacana* reading programme, especially the Ratana Sutta. The reading of this *palivacana* is encouraged by the chairman to be carried out by the congregation every night on a regular basis.

CONCLUSIONS

The chairman as a *figurehead* in crisis management provides motivation to the congregation and a *role model* in building a positive *image* to support government programmes to prevent transmission of COVID-19. The chairman in an informational role monitors the development of the crisis, the chairman digs up actual information and disseminates it. The chairman also makes decisions and becomes a *negotiator*.

The chairman's leadership style in crisis management is relationship-orientated autocratic directive. The chairman as the *firstline manager* emphasises on the congregation to follow the guidelines for the implementation of religious activities in the era of adaptation of new habits. Buddhist values that the chairman implements in the leadership style are compassion (*karuna*), devotion, love (*metta*), willingness (*dana*). The chairman builds relationships with empathy and respects the feelings of monastics as members.

The innovative strategy of the head of the buddha sasana jaya monastery in Covid-19 crisis management from making policies from various aspects, namely financial, learning, beliefs and internal policies in crisis management. The financial aspect of the community includes providing basic necessities as a form of assistance and concern for the monastery leaders, donors, and monastery administrators. The chairman's strategy to overcome the problem of monastery operational funds by organising kathina, *pattidana*, and candle puja activities. The chairman also created *online* learning innovations through *whatsapp* group media. In order to increase the belief (*saddha*) and spirituality of the

chairman through the recitation of the Ratana Sutta. The last strategy is to increase people's awareness in implementing mindfulness and health protocols by completing the means of overcoming Covid-19 transmission.

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