

A culture-based public relations perspective on the traditional performing art of “Caci”

Yermia Djefri Manafe¹, Petrus Ana Andung², Mohd Nor Shahizan Ali³

^{1,2}Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Nusa Cendana, Kupang, Indonesia

³Center for Media and Communication (MENTION), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Selangor, Malaysia

Submitted: 28 September 2024, Revised: 10 January 2025, Accepted: 19 January 2025, Published: 12 February 2025

ABSTRACT

Background: *Caci* performance art is a vital cultural asset of the Manggarai community in East Nusa Tenggara Province. However, the rapid advancement of internet-based technologies poses a significant threat to the survival of traditional forms of folk media, including *Caci* as a traditional game. As such, an effective communication strategy is essential to preserving the noble cultural values embedded in *Caci* and promoting its significance to a broader audience. **Purpose:** This study explored the forms of culture-based public relations activities associated with *Caci* and analyzed the communicative functions of art within this context. **Methods:** The study used an ethnographic approach. The informant's involvement in this research includes serving as a primary source during interviews, guiding participant observations, and consulting on research findings to ensure the accuracy of the data. **Results:** The findings indicated several culture-based public relations activities linked to *Caci*, including community relationship-building, *bentang cama* as a forum for planning, *Caci* as a vehicle to reinforce the masculinity of Manggarai men, post-performance evaluation, and public communication regarding the cultural significance of *Caci*. **Conclusion:** *Caci* performance art encapsulates key components of public relations, encompassing the stages of fact-finding, planning, communication, and evaluation. These stages reinforce the role of *Caci* as a tool for executing culture-based public relations strategies. Furthermore, the *Caci* ritual, as a traditional performance serves as social, magical-religious, and entertainment functions. **Implications:** Public relations research can be expanded through a cultural perspective aligned with local community values. Additionally, traditional performing arts like *Caci* can be effective tools in PR strategies, fostering innovative, culturally grounded approaches. The study also emphasizes the need to preserve and promote traditional arts as essential to cultural identity in the face of advancing internet technology.

Keywords: Caci; Manggarai; folk media; culture; public relations

To cite this article (APA Style):

Manafe, Y.D., Andung, P.A., & Ali, M.N.S. (2025). A culture-based public relations perspective on the traditional performing art of “Caci”. *PRofesi Humas*. 9(2), 155-175. <https://doi.org/10.24198/prh.v9i2.58116>

Correspondence: Dr. Yermia Djefri Manafe, S.Sos., M.Si. Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Nusa Cendana, Kupang, Timor, Indonesia. Jl. Adisucipto, Penfui, Kota Kupang, East Nusa Tenggara Province, Indonesia, 85148. *E-mail:* yermiadjefri@staf.undana.ac.id

ISSN: 2528-6927 (printed), ISSN: 2541-3678 (online). Website: <http://jurnal.unpad.ac.id/profesi-humas>

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License

(<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>). Copyright © 2025 The Author(s).

INTRODUCTION

The Manggarai community is one of the ethnic groups in East Nusa Tenggara Province with abundant natural resource potential. In addition, the diverse cultural heritage passed down through generations has attracted great interest from tourists. As a result, this region has become a prime tourist destination in East Nusa Tenggara. This can be seen in the growing number of tourist villages, such as Wae Codi Village (Rudiyanto, 2024). As a tourist village, various traditional art performances have become increasingly popular, particularly aimed at entertaining visitors or tourists. One of these is the traditional folk game called *Caci*.

Caci showcases a fusion of the aesthetic beauty of body movements and attire (*lomes*), vocal performances (*bokak*), and martial skill (*lime*), with the art of whipping and combat forming the core. The term *Caci* is etymologically derived from two words: *Ca*, meaning one, and *Ci*, meaning opposite (Luhur, 2020). Historically, *Caci* was a sacred ritual held to honor ancestral spirits, symbolizing the power of these spirits in controlling human desires. However, as times have evolved, the sacred nature of *Caci* has transitioned into a more routine cultural event.

These changes occur within the cultural dynamics due to globalization

and modernization. Consequently, *Caci* performances are commonly found at various events, especially during national ceremonies held in open fields and public centers, serving as entertainment. In contrast, the original *Caci* is performed only in the front yard of traditional houses (*Natas Beo*).

Caci is essentially a form of traditional performance or game in which two men from different villages, yet related by kinship, voluntarily engage in a duel, striking and whipping each other to test their agility (Bate et al., 2023; Jama et al., 2020). Although it resembles a “fighting” dance, *Caci* is fundamentally categorized as a folk medium. *Caci* performances convey symbolic forms of communication to fellow *Caci* dancers and the broader audience.

As a form of traditional communication, *Caci* is rich in cultural symbolism, characterized by unique elements of movement, costume, and dramatic enactments. This performance art is a representation of movement, resembling a stylized combat between two male warriors, each armed with a whip and a shield. The player wielding the whip acts as the aggressor, while the other player, equipped with a shield, assumes the role of defender. Participants are divided into two groups, alternating between offense and defense. Typically, the players consist of the host (*ngara beo*) and invited participants

from neighboring villages (*meka landang*).

The use of various traditional arts, including *Caci*, as folk media in rural communities shows that the advance of digital communication technology does not necessarily replace traditional media based on local wisdom. Rural communities are not entirely dependent on modern media. They generally continue to preserve and depend on folk media as a traditional communication tool in diverse forms and types, aligned with the characteristics and customs of the local community (Tadi & Nawaz Khan, 2021).

Folk media serves as a communication tool passed down across generations (Tadi & Nawaz Khan, 2021; Tamuli & Mishra, 2023). It is deeply embedded in the everyday social life of indigenous communities and manifests in diverse expressions such as songs, folk dances, arts, crafts, rituals, and festivals—each integral to the community's cultural fabric (Mishra & Newme, 2021). Folk media serve different functions depending on the context in which they are used. Some of the key functions associated with folk media, especially in the form of traditional performing arts, are: First, the informational function. This function is evident when folk media are embedded with informative messages for the audience. Second, the educational function. Informal community leaders or tribal elders can impart

advice to the younger generation through these performances. Third, the function of expressing the position of the community. This function is visible when folk media are performed to convey the community's attitudes or aspirations to policy makers, the government. Finally, the entertainment function, which is one of the most dominant functions of folk media. Through the performance of traditional arts, the community can enjoy the entertainment value (Andung & Nope, 2017).

The presence of folk media in traditional communities is beneficial, especially in disseminating information or innovations to indigenous communities. Folk media can communicate various ideas and messages to the communities that engage with them (Kumar, 2022; Yemer, 2020). In addition, the use of folk media is quite effective in gathering rural communities. It can encourage and enhance community participation in village development (As'adi, 2020). One of the main strengths of folk media is that it has become an integral part of the community's daily life. In fact, these traditional art forms are inseparable from the culture and customary rituals of the community.

Nevertheless, one of the significant challenges facing the preservation of traditional media, including *Caci*, is the growing influence of digital-based technologies. The advent of the digital-based technological revolution,

including ubiquitous computing, robotics, and artificial intelligence, has given rise to a truly digitized network society (Knell, 2021). Technological advancements and the rapid penetration of the internet into rural areas pose a potential threat to the survival of local cultural practices, including *Caci* (Poroe et al., 2022). Without proactive measures, the long-term existence of *Caci* could be jeopardized.

In response to this challenge, a well-defined communication strategy is essential to safeguard the noble values embodied in *Caci* performance art and ensure its transmission to a broader audience. One effective approach is enforcing a series of public relations (PR) activities. Notably, the execution of public relations is no longer confined to formal organizations. Non-formal institutions, such as cultural managers and activists, can perform similar roles and functions traditionally associated with formal PR (Hidayat et al., 2018). In this context, the concept of culture-based public relations becomes a strategic and vital approach.

Before delving further into culture-based public relations, outlining the concept of public relations is fundamental. Generally, the simplest definition of public relations refers to a process by which an organization establishes communication with stakeholders (Bajaj, 2023). Public relations can be approached from two perspectives. First, public relations as a

management function, which relates to efforts to maintain relationships between the organization and all its stakeholders. This perspective involves activities related to strategic decision-making, planning, implementation, and evaluation processes. Second, the perspective that views public relations as a relationship builder, with the primary role of establishing and maintaining communication with stakeholders (Sancar, 2016).

As public relations practices evolve within society, several experts have begun to recognize the importance of a cultural approach. The significance of incorporating culture into public relations activities can have a substantial impact on various social and cultural changes within communities. In this context, public relations can serve as a cultural intermediary (Cronin & Edwards, 2022). Moreover, strategic public relations becomes more effective when applied in countries with culturally diverse populations (Karatayeva, 2020).

Public relations play a role in raising public awareness of a community's cultural wealth preserving that culture. Therefore, several strategic communication steps for safeguarding cultural heritage include conducting problem identification or situational analysis related to the culture, planning, determining communication methods, and taking action (Ünlü et al., 2023).

The notion of culture-based public

relations, or cultural PR, is a relatively novel framework that integrates cultural dimensions into PR studies and theories. It emphasizes two primary concerns: the importance of adopting a cultural studies perspective in PR theory, and the necessity of exploring public relations practices through cultural lens (Hidayat et al., 2018).

Research exploring the intersection of cultural dimensions within PR studies has been extensively examined by scholars. Notably, a study entitled *The IPPAR Model as an Essential Component of PR Ethnography in Culture-based Public Relations Studies* highlights the communication behavior components of the *Jakhu Suku* as a Cultural PR within the entitle-granting ritual procession. These components include *pekhsiapan* (preparation), *khencana* (planning), *lestakhi* (implementation), *penghengok* (support), and *penghanggum* (trust) (Hidayat et al., 2017). The focus of the study was narrowly centered on the communication behaviors within the entitle-granting ritual as a representation of cultural PR, which is notably different from the current study. Nonetheless, their findings provide a foundational framework for this research, particularly in conceptualizing culture-based PR.

Another study, entitled *A Cultural Public Relations Approach to Angklung Bamboo Musical Instrument Craft Workshop Activities*,

suggests the need for effective public relations to manage the image and reputation of cultural values embedded within the bamboo *angklung* musical instrument (Gustini et al., 2023). This research diverges from our current study, which centers on the PR components within traditional performing arts. Gustini and colleagues focus specifically on PR activities concerning the bamboo *angklung* musical instrument workshop, whereas our research aims to examine broader PR elements within traditional performing arts.

Another study on the cultural approach in public relations is found in the research entitled “Intercultural Communication Approach in PT Santos’ Public Relations in Building Empathetic Communication.” The study reveals the communication approach between PT Santos’ public relations and the community of Gili Genting, Madura, East Java. The results confirmed that an empathy-based communication approach rooted in local culture, integrated into public relations activities, successfully fostered good relations with the community, allowing activities ranging from situational analysis, and program planning, to program socialization to run smoothly (Yayu et al., 2019). The findings from the Gili Genting, Madura study differ from those of the research conducted in Manggarai. The primary difference lies in the research focus. Yayu and colleagues emphasized how to consider and

incorporate local traditions and cultural values into the public relations activities of a company. In contrast, the research on the *Caci* traditional performance focuses on how this cultural performance potentially serves as an instrument in public relations activities. Nevertheless, Yayu and colleagues' work has inspired research on cultural perspectives in public relations related to *Caci*.

Furthermore, studies on the *Caci* performance have also garnered scholarly attention, with one prominent example being the research entitled *The Use of Symbolic Language in Caci Aesthetic Performance*. This study concludes that *Caci* performing arts communicate philosophical values through both verbal and nonverbal symbolic languages, as analyzed using semiotic theory (Jama & Menggo, 2023). However, this research does not delve into the PR aspects of *Caci*, limiting its scope to the philosophical values embedded in the performance. In contrast, our study seeks to explore the PR dimensions within *Caci*, thus advancing understanding in a more specialized domain.

Another study titled "Communication Messages Behind the Caci Dance of Manggarai Raya, East Nusa Tenggara Province" also concludes that the *Caci* embodies symbolic messages, including sportsmanship, togetherness, family ties, brotherhood,

cooperation, and mutual assistance (Antonius, 2021). This research focuses on the messages conveyed through the *Caci* performance, without addressing its potential as a culturally based public relations tool.

Based on the review of previous research, the novelty of this study lies in its investigation of the forms of culture-based public relations embedded in the traditional performance art of *Caci*, focusing on the stages of preparation, implementation, and post-implementation. This research examines the specific public relations activities within *Caci* performing arts and analyzes the communicative functions that art serves within this performance.

This study is grounded in Relationship Management Theory, as developed by John Ledingham and Steven Bruning (1998). According to this theory, organizations must cultivate harmonious relationships with their surrounding environment and communities to garner optimal support (Widowati & Diana, 2018). Through the use of communication, the organization can achieve intimacy and emotional connection with the community (Li, 2023).

The theory emphasizes that the relationship between an organization and stakeholders should ideally be based on several key factors: trust, satisfaction, commitment, and control. If these four aspects are well-maintained, the

organization can successfully build mutually beneficial relationships with public (Mahardika, 2020).

The application of relationship management theory in this research is beneficial for theoretically elucidating how the traditional Caci performance serves as an instrument for fostering intimate relationships among community members in Manggarai. Furthermore, this theory aids the researcher in developing a communication model for culturally based public relations activities.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study is grounded in the interpretive paradigm and employs a qualitative methodology, with ethnography as the primary research approach. Ethnographic research is especially well-suited for exploring social phenomena, particularly those related to the daily practices of a cultural group (Walsh et al., 2023). By ethnography, the researcher can authentically capture and observe the events surrounding the *Caci* ceremony from the perspective of the participants.

The research was conducted in Wae Codi Village, located in the West Cibal Sub-district of Manggarai Regency, East Nusa Tenggara Province, over four months from June to September 2024. This village has emerged as

a prominent tourist destination (Rudiyanto, 2024). As a tourist village, it showcases various traditional art performances, particularly the folk game *Caci*, which aims to entertain visitors. The selection of Wae Codi as a research site is justified by its cultural richness and the significant impact of tourism on the local community.

The data collection techniques employed in this study included in-depth interviews and participant observation. The interview process began with explaining the research objectives and the rationale for selecting the individual as an informant. Upon seeking consent, the interviews were carried out, averaging between 50 to 60 minutes in duration. Concurrently, participant observation was conducted during the preparatory phases of the *Caci* performing arts event, both at the Gendang residence and during the actual performances.

The study involved a total of eight participants. Sampling was executed using purposive sampling methods. Criteria for informant selection included representation from local elders, *Caci* performers, local government officials, and community representatives. The number of samples or informants was determined based on the principle of data saturation, where data collection ceased when no new information pertinent to the research objectives was found. The informant's involvement in this research

includes serving as a primary source during interviews, guiding participant observations, and consulting on research findings to ensure the accuracy of the data.

The collected data underwent analysis using a thematic analysis method, which consisted of six distinct stages. The first stage involved data familiarization, accomplished by reviewing audio recordings of the interviews and subsequently transcribing them in a non-verbatim version. The second stage focused on coding, manifested through specific abbreviations that encapsulated summaries of the transcript content, elucidating participant responses. The third stage involved the identification of themes pertinent to the study topic. The fourth stage concentrated on reviewing the established themes to ensure alignment with the study objectives. In the fifth stage, themes were categorized, and a visual mind map was constructed to illustrate the interconnections between various themes. Finally, the sixth stage culminated in the presentation of the results as a qualitative narrative report (Xu & Zammit, 2020).

To ensure the validity of this research, both data triangulation and methodological triangulation were strategically employed (Zelčāne & Pipere, 2023). Data triangulation involved engaging a diverse array of informants, including village government officials,

community leaders, youth leaders, teachers, and residents. Simultaneously, methodological triangulation was implemented by juxtaposing information obtained from in-depth interviews with data gathered through participant observation. This comparative analysis facilitated the identification of consistent themes across the diverse methods, significantly bolstering the credibility and reliability of the research conclusions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the harvest thanksgiving ritual (*Penti*), the *Caci* performance begins with the initiative of the local elder or chief of a village to gather the residents. In the Manggarai tradition, every village has at least one traditional house (*rumah Gendang*). When the harvest season has ended, the elders gather the villagers at the Gendang house. They will strike a gong, usually in the evening, as a sign that all villagers must gather at the Gendang house as soon as possible.

As P1 stated that:

“The Caci tradition is done routinely every year in the harvest thanksgiving ceremony, Penti. The community actually wants to pass on this tradition so that it is preserved from generation to generation” (P1, in-depth interview).

Upon arriving at the Gendang house, the elder invites the present villagers to discuss the need for the Penti celebration ritual (harvest

thanksgiving). The discussion also covers the need for the *Caci* ritual as a complement or accompanying ritual to the Penti thanksgiving.

To streamline the preparation, the elder typically forms a small committee responsible for organizing everything required to ensure the success of the ceremony. One of their tasks is to invite residents from other villages, whether from the same village or neighboring villages, to be opponents in the *Caci* game.

When the day of the event comes, as agreed, the invited guests (*meka landang*) gather and stay overnight in the homes of their hosts. The guests are directed to the Gendang house, where the “*Kappu*” ritual, or the guest reception ceremony, will take place. This ritual is a symbol of their request for “prayers” to their ancestors for the visiting guests to remain healthy, especially during the *Caci* ceremony. The peak of this reception event involves drinking traditional liquor together.

Throughout the night before the *Caci* ritual, traditional singing rituals are performed. Usually, both the hosts and guests join together to celebrate this singing ritual before resting for the night. The next morning, around 5:00 AM, the *Caci* performers will prepare for the designated arena, with costumes and *Caci* equipment. The accessories used by *Caci* performers include *panggal* (head protector), *lalong ndeki* (ornament resembling a buffalo



Source: Author, 2024

Figure 1 Clothing in the Caci performance

tail), *nggorong* (bell), *nggiling* (shield), *agang* (bow-shaped defender), *larik* (whip), *sapu* (headband), and *songke* (sash).

At the location of the *Caci* performance, both sides (the hosts and the guests) will again perform the ritual of *lilik*, walking around the traditional altar or offering place (*compang*) to ask for blessings from their ancestors (Figure 1). This ritual is also a way to pay respect to the ancestors before starting the *Caci* performance. The *lilik* process is carried out alternately by both the guests and the hosts.

The traditional *compang* is usually located right in front of the Gendang house. The *lilik* ritual at the *compang* is also performed by shouting traditional cheers. The *Caci* dancers will make five turns around the altar *compang*. Soon after, the dancers start performing dance movements around the yard, immediately followed by the opposing party. At the same time, the local elder gives advice, reminding

everyone to maintain a friendly atmosphere during the *Caci* performance.

Next, each *Caci* team (one-on-one) begins to strike one member of the opposing side, whether from the guests or the hosts. This whip-fighting game is done alternately between the two men until finished. One dancer holding the whip (*larik*) acts as the attacker, while another man defends himself using a shield (*nggiling*). In a single arena, there can generally be several pairs of men competing against each other. While striking and blocking, both will perform dance movements. Additionally, during the *Caci* game, traditional songs accompany the performance. The *Caci* performance ritual is open from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM.

The next section presents the forms of culturally-based public relations activities within the *Caci* performance. However, before further elaborating on the culturally-based PR aspects in the *Caci* performance, a summary of the interview results and the themes will be provided. More details can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1 shows that the cultural PR aspects in the *Caci* performance ritual include: first, building relationships with the community. One important component of public relations is establishing connections with the public or community to maintain the organization's image through communication (Ejiofo et al., 2023). One of the main reasons for conducting the

Caci performance is to foster good relationships between residents of different villages.

As explained by P2, below:

“The main reason for the *Caci* dance is actually to maintain the ties of brotherhood among residents from different villages. This means that the kinship by marriage is usually only a formal relationship” (P2, in-depth interview).

The statement of P2 is also supported by other informants. P8 emphasizes, “*Caci* can play a role in strengthening the bonds of kinship among the diverse family branches”.

Based on some informants' opinions and participant observation, the *Caci* performance has met an important aspect of public relations in terms of urgency in building good relationships with the public or community. The *Caci* ritual is maximized as an instrument for nurturing and strengthening emotional ties between the customary institution, in this case, the *Gendang* house as the initiator and organizer of the ritual, and the residents inside and outside the village. Therefore, the *Caci* performance also contains a mission to establish strong relationships among the residents and the customary institution.

Secondly, the *bantang cama* serves as a planning forum. One important component in public relations strategy, according to the four-step RACE model, is planning, besides implementation and evaluation. The planning phase is where clear and measurable agendas

Table 1 Summary of informants' interview results on the essence of Caci

Category	Interview statements of participants
Building relation-ships with the community	<p>P2: "The main reason for the <i>Caci</i> dance is actually to maintain the ties of brotherhood among residents from different villages. This means that the kinship formed due to marriage is usually only a formal relationship.</p> <p>P8: "...The <i>Caci</i> can play a role in strengthening the bonds of kinship among the various family branches, whether from the anak wina or the anak rona."</p> <p>P4: "The <i>Caci</i> dance is performed because there are kinship ties among those participating (the anak rona/male in-laws and anak wina/female in-laws)."</p> <p>P1: "...<i>Caci</i> serves as a symbol of social competence, establishing good communication between one village and another."</p>
<i>Bantang cama</i> , as a delibera-tion to make plans	<p>P1: "Prior to the performance, a planning event known as <i>bantang cama</i> is held. This is a deliberative forum that involves local residents from each clan within a single village."</p> <p>P3: "Before the actual day of the <i>Caci</i> performance, there is a collective deliberation (<i>bantang cama</i>) to plan who the Meka Landang (invited guests) will be..."</p> <p>P6: "... Both parties typically hold internal meetings prior to performing this ritual to align their perceptions and understanding to ensure the smooth execution of the ritual."</p>
Strengthen the image that Manggarai men are mighty men	<p>P7 "<i>Caci</i> has a symbolic meaning, which is masculinity. This is because the <i>Caci</i> dance stands for Ca and Ci, which shows the masculinity of Manggarai men.</p> <p>P5 "<i>Caci</i> is a cultural treasure, especially for the Manggarai people..."</p> <p>P4 "The value of courage of the men who participate in <i>Caci</i> where there is a battle of skill. The value of this courage is because not everyone is skilled and good at performing this <i>Caci</i> dance..."</p>
Post-implementation Evaluation of <i>Caci</i>	<p>P7 "The evaluation stage is conducted to evaluate the continuity of the activity. This stage also includes a thank you to the representatives of meka landang with the term <i>merep weki</i>, which means to relax from the <i>Caci</i> process and <i>teng hang</i> (eat together) and rest".</p> <p>"P2 "... after the <i>Caci</i> is completed, it is usually followed by an evaluation of the <i>Caci</i> activity by the host...The purpose is to evaluate the implementation of the <i>Caci</i>".</p>
Public Communication on cultural existence	<p>P1 "... with <i>Caci</i> the community actually wants to make an effort to pass on this tradition so that it is preserved from generation to generation..."</p> <p>P4 "The reason why the <i>Caci</i> tradition is held in public is to remind the community that <i>Caci</i> is our culture. <i>Caci</i> is a cultural asset of the Manggarai people that needs to be preserved".</p>

Source: Research Result, 2024

are formulated and defined for a specific period (Coll-Rubio & Micó, 2020).

The *Caci* performance ritual also includes a planning component known as *Bentang Cama*. This event is a moment when the customary elders and village residents come together to discuss and make plans regarding the parties invited as *Meka Landang* (opponents in the *Caci* performance), determining and preparing logistics and accommodations, organizing the committee, and planning accompanying rituals.

Informants noted that *Bentang Cama* is a key component for the success of the *Caci* performance. If planning is not well established through *Bentang Cama*, the *Caci* ritual will not run smoothly. As expressed by P3 & P1.

The process of the *Caci* performance ritual also fulfills an important aspect of public relations strategy, which involves planning (*Bentang Cama*). Therefore, the *Caci* performance can be seen as a form of culturally based public relations.

Third, *Caci* serves as a moment to strengthen the image of the strength of Manggarai men. Community relationships play a significant role in shaping an image (Iskandar & Tamburian, 2023; Yuan, 2023). In the *Caci* ritual performance, one goal communicated by the Manggarai elders is to strengthen the public's perception that Manggarai men are strong, gentle, and true fighters. This image

serves as the spirit of the traditional *Caci* game, where two men pair off to demonstrate skills in evading strikes.

The statements of the informants underscore that the *Caci* performance serves as a culturally rich public relations moment aimed, among other things, at strengthening the impression or image of strength and heroism regarding Manggarai men. The *Caci* performance contains symbolic meanings related to efforts to maintain and enhance the positive image of the prowess of Manggarai men.

Fourth, the evaluation activities following the *Caci* performance. One of the key strategies in public relations is the evaluation process (Iskandar & Tamburian, 2023). Evaluation allows the committee to measure how well the public relations activities were executed according to the initial plans.

An essential component of the *Caci* ritual ceremony is the collective evaluation activity known as *merep weki*. According to informants (P7 and P2), the evaluation at the *rumah gendang* involves a reflective discussion of the entire sequence of the *Penti* and *Caci* ceremonies with the village residents. One of the goals is to discuss and assess the execution of the ritual to gain insights and guidance from the customary elders. This evaluation is beneficial as a foundation for enhancing and refining similar ritual ceremonies in the future.

Fifth, public communication regarding the existence of *Caci* culture is crucial. Discussing public relations from a cultural perspective not only focuses on the importance of communication planning in addressing public relations issues but also pays attention to other prominent aspects, such as the community itself, internal and external communication, and the identity of the relevant institutions (Hidayat et al., 2018). Therefore, public communication aimed at conveying the existence of such institutions is vital in discussions about public relations.

In the traditional *Caci* performance, one symbolic expression conveyed is the importance of preserving this generational folk game. Engaging in the *Caci* ritual is not merely an entertainment attraction; more importantly, the customary elders and village residents wish to communicate to the broader public that this traditional performance art is a cultural asset to preserve.

According to informants P1 and P4, the efforts to preserve this traditional art rely solely on the elements of the performance. In the Manggarai community tradition, there are no strategies or methods for teaching this ancestral heritage to the younger generation through formal training or simulations. The *Caci* performance arena is seen as a platform for introducing this heritage to the youth to ensure

its preservation.

The *Caci* performance art not only functions as a traditional means of communication but also fulfills the components of public relations. The public relations process includes several stages, from fact-gathering, planning, and communication to evaluation (Lazarević, 2023). These four stages of public relations are also present in the *Caci* performance ritual. The fact-gathering phase occurs during the preparation for the *Caci* ceremony. As previously mentioned, the customary elders summon village residents to discuss the necessity of conducting the *Caci* ritual as part of the post-harvest thanksgiving ceremony (*Penti*). The planning aspect of the *Caci* ritual is evident in the *bentang cama* (deliberation) phase, where the customary elders and village residents discuss and create a detailed agenda for the *Caci* performance, along with the responsibilities of each member involved in a small organizing committee. This planning stage also determines the opponents in the *Caci* match, the timing of the performance, and the necessary budget.

In terms of communication during the preparation for *Caci*, negotiations with the opposing parties, communication from the customary elders to the *Caci* participants, and the exchange of symbolic messages between the *Caci* players and the audience are observed. Lastly, the evaluation or assessment phase in

Caci takes place after the performance, where the customary elders reconvene with the village residents, particularly the organizing committee, to reflect on and evaluate the realization of the *Caci* ritual.

The public relations practices identified within the *Caci* performance ritual fall under the category of culturally-based public relations, commonly referred to as Cultural PR. This cultural public relations concept emphasizes the study of public relations through a cultural approach (Hidayat et al., 2018). Therefore, public relations also acts as a “cultural intermediary” in communicating and maintaining cultural characteristics (Özoran, 2021).

This research also offers a new perspective that non-formal organizations, such as customary groups within society, possess the capacity to perform public relations tasks and roles, particularly regarding efforts to build relationships and communication with both internal and external communities, as well as their potential to promote cultural imagery to a broader audience (Clara & Marta, 2021). In the modern technological era, the promotion of cultural heritage is paramount (Anwar et al., 2024).

The artistic communication within the *Caci* performance contains several primary functions. Table 2 presents a detailed overview of

informant statements as a basis for constructing the functions of *Caci* communication.

Based on the data presented in Table 2, at least three functions of artistic communication in the *Caci* performance have been identified: first, the social function. The *Caci* performance is closely linked to uniting familial ties among village residents, particularly between two family lineages connected solely through marriage. Consequently, one of the functions of the *Caci* performance lies in the social aspect.

As informants P1, P3, and P6 stated, the execution of the *Caci* ritual transcends mere entertainment; the essence behind it possesses the capability to unite and strengthen solidarity and brotherhood among community members. This solidarity is evident from the preparation of the activities, the execution, and the post-performance reflection following *Caci*. The customary elders or heads of the *rumah gendang* play a significant role in fostering the cohesiveness among community members in conducting this ritual.

The second function is religious magic. As previously explained, the *Caci* is typically held in the front yard of the customary house (*Natas Beo*). The hosting of the *Caci* in front of the customary house is related to the processes and stages of other accompanying rituals preceding the *Caci* performance. According to the community leaders (P6 and P4), the *Caci* ritual

Table 2 Informants' statements about the functions of Caci performance art

Category	Interview statements of participants
Social Function	<p>P6 "Through <i>Caci</i>, relationships between villages can become closer. For example, if there is a Anak Wina and a Anak Rona, through <i>Caci</i> the marriage relationship that has been established between them can become closer.</p> <p>P1 "<i>Caci</i> is not just a traditional game. For us Manggarai people, it has the ability to perform social functions, namely its ability to unite different elements in society.</p> <p>P3 "<i>Caci</i> is one of the traditional artworks for the Manggarai people to express that Manggarai men are powerful and manly. The more lashes a man receives, the higher his masculinity is symbolized.</p>
Magical religious function	<p>P6 "<i>Caci</i> as part of the Penti thanksgiving ceremony also contains religious values, namely the expression of prayers to the ancestors for the harvest obtained.</p> <p>P4 "<i>Caci</i> performance ceremonies are always colorful and preceded by a series of ritual worship ceremonies. The performance of <i>Caci</i> symbolizes the worship of the spirits of the ancestors of the Manggarai people.</p> <p>P1 "The <i>Caci</i> ritual is part of a series of harvest thanksgiving ceremonies, Penti, in the Manggarai tradition. Through <i>Caci</i>, the point is to indirectly communicate to other communities that the community is always grateful for the blessings of the harvest.</p>
Entertain function	<p>P8 "...<i>Caci</i> is a traditional game. People always eagerly wait and watch <i>Caci</i>. It is entertainment for the community. People will flock to see <i>Caci</i> because it is not played every day. It has its time".</p> <p>P2 "<i>Caci</i> has an element of entertainment. Although two men compete in strength, their movements are accompanied by traditional dances and songs that entertain the people watching".</p>

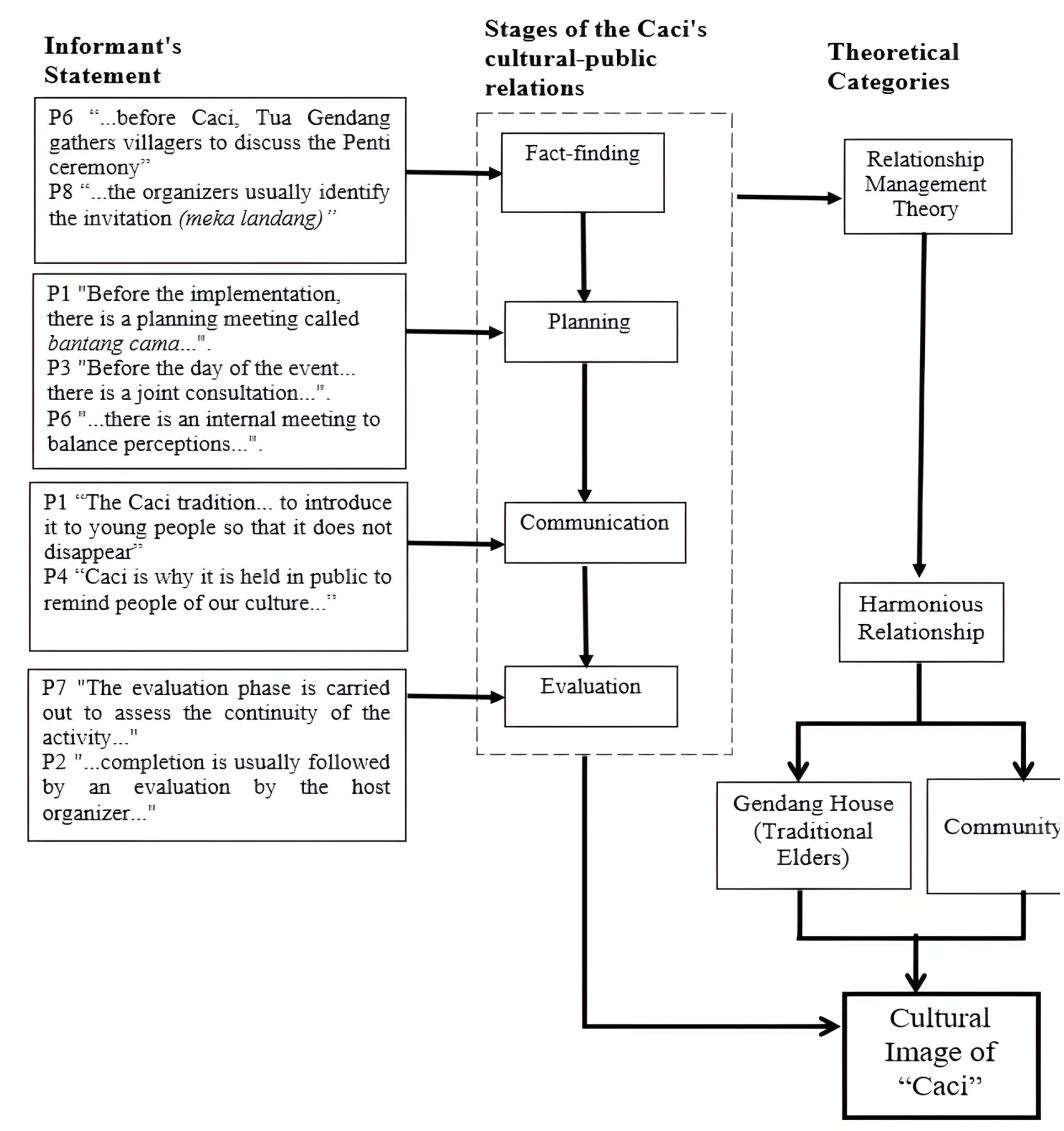
Source: Research Result, 2024

serves as an instrument for worshipping the ancestral spirits of the Manggarai people. This is observed through the *lilik* ritual, during which the *Caci* dancers encircle the customary altar (*compang adat*) five times before commencing the performance.

The third function is entertainment. Essentially, the *Caci* performance conveys messages of beauty, harmony, and humility. The aesthetic message of *Caci* is evident when

the *Caci* performers engage in dialogue and song following an attack, such as a strike. The songs hold aesthetic significance and entertain the audience. Initially tense during the striking scenes, the audience is alleviated by the singing.

The findings of this study reinforce several similar studies discussing culturally-based public relations aspects. What has been uncovered in the *Caci* performance art substantiates previous research titled "The



Source: Research Result, 2024

Figure 2 Cultural PR Model in Caci Performing Arts from the Perspective of Relationship Management Theory

IPPAR Model as an Ethnographic Component of Cultural Public Relations Studies” (Hidayat et al., 2017). This research indicates that cultural artistic practices, such as *Caci* and the *Jakhu Suku*, can serve public relations roles within the community. Similarly, the cultural PR practices identified in other research entitled “Cultural Public Relations Approach to Angklung

Bamboo Musical Instrument Craft Workshop Activities” (Gustini et al., 2023) confirm that, akin to the *angklung* bamboo workshop, the *Caci* ritual performance encompasses several cultural PR activities aimed primarily at building and maintaining the image and reputation of cultural values.

This study also provides a different

perspective from the previous research titled “The Use of Symbolic Language in *Caci* Aesthetic Performance” (Jama & Menggo, 2023). It asserts that the *Caci* performance not only communicates philosophical values represented through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbolic languages but also plays as a public medium in executing culturally-based public relations strategies.

When explored through the lens of Relationship Management Theory by John Ledingham and Steven Bruning, the *Caci* ritual initiated by the customary elders in Manggarai constitutes allows them to establish harmonious relationships with the surrounding environment or community, thereby ensuring the continued support and sustainability of *Caci* (Widowati & Diana, 2018). From the perspective of Relationship Management Theory, optimizing communication—represented here through both internal and external communication throughout the *Caci* performance—will foster emotional closeness with the community (Li, 2023). The cultural PR model within the *Caci* performance, when visualized and linked with Relationship Management Theory, is illustrated in Figure 2.

CONCLUSION

The *Caci* performance art represents key

components of public relations, encompassing fact-gathering, planning, communication, and evaluation. These four stages solidify the role of the *Caci* ritual in its capacity to implement culturally-based public relations strategies. Additionally, the *Caci* ritual, as a traditional performance art, serves several functions, including social, religious-magical, and entertainment functions. The social function pertains to its ability to unite and strengthen solidarity and a sense of brotherhood among participants. The religious function is evident in *Caci*’s role as part of the ritual ceremonies of the Manggarai people. Lastly, the entertainment function is indicated by its capacity to provide enjoyment to the audience.

The findings of this study have significant academic implications, as it shows that public relations research can be further explored and expanded using a cultural perspective aligned with the characteristics and values of the local community. Additionally, traditional performing arts, such as *Caci*, can serve as effective tools within PR strategies to foster the development of innovative, culturally grounded approaches in public relations practice. Furthermore, the study also highlights the importance of preserving and promoting traditional arts as an integral part of a society’s cultural identity amidst the technology development.

However, this study has several limitations.

First, the *Caci* ritual observed and analyzed was limited to its role within the *penti* thanksgiving ceremony. In reality, the *Caci* ritual is also performed during other important events, such as weddings (*wagal*), the completion of traditional house construction (*cengko lakap*), the culmination of funeral ceremonies (*kelas mese*), and harvest time (*ako/hang woja*) or the opening of new land. Therefore, future research on *Caci* should also examine and compare its performance in other ceremonies beyond harvest thanksgiving to gain a richer and more comprehensive perspective.

This study suggested that the *Caci* performance should be continuously preserved as a valuable cultural asset of the nation. The Manggarai Regency Government is encouraged to mandate that primary and secondary education include this traditional performance art in the local curriculum to ensure the preservation of this traditional cultural heritage. Furthermore, the community in Wae Codi village is advised to strengthen the role of traditional houses (*rumah gendang*) and the involvement of traditional elders in ensuring cultural preservation, including *Caci*, by formalizing traditional institutions.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, YDJM, PAA, MNSA; methodology, PAA; formal analysis, YDJM, MNSA; writing—original draft preparation, YDJM; writing review and editing, PAA, MNSA; visualization, PAA; supervision, MNSA; project administration,

YDJM; All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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

- Andung, P. A., & Nope, H. A. (2017). Media rakyat sebagai media komunikasi pembangunan masyarakat Suku Boti. *Jurnal ILMU KOMUNIKASI*, 14(2), 277–292. <https://ojs.uaajy.ac.id/index.php/jik/article/view/870/1079>
- Antonius, D. (2021). Pesan komunikasi di balik seni tari Caci Manggarai Raya, Provinsi NTT (Studi Kasus Permainan Caci Ikatan Keluarga Satar Mese dan Lamba Leda, di *Verba Vitae Unwira*, 2(1), 33–62. <https://www.journal.unwira.ac.id/index.php/VERBAVITAE/article/view/461%0Ahttps://www.journal.unwira.ac.id/index.php/VERBAVITAE/article/download/461/178>
- Anwar, R. K., Lusiana, E., Khadijah, U. L. S., & Kusmayadi, I. M. (2024). Preserving Batik Trusmi’s image: Public relations strategies in Cirebon’s heritage. *PROfesi Humas*, 8(2), 195. <https://doi.org/10.24198/prh.v8i2.49613>
- As’adi, M. H. (2020). Media Tradisional Sebagai Media Komunikasi Pembangunan Masyarakat Titidu Gorontalo. *Kalijaga Journal of Communication*, 2(1), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.14421/kjc.21.01.2020>
- Bajaj, D. R. (2023). Function Of Public Relations In Establishing And Maintaining

- Corporate Image. *Journal for ReAttach Therapy and Developmental Diversities*, 6, 465–470. <https://doi.org/10.53555/jrtdd.v6i4s.2212>
- Bate, N., Wani, B., Weli, Y., & Jaun, H. E. (2023). Upaya Pelestarian Tarian Caci Di Daerah Manggarai Provinsi Nusa Tenggara Timur Sebagai Bentuk Aktivitas Olahraga. *Jurnal Edukasi Citra Olahraga*, 3(2), 82–90. <https://doi.org/10.38048/jor.v3i2.2098>
- Clara, Y. Y., & Marta, R. F. (2021). Peran kehumasan Koko Jali mempertukarkan nilai keberagaman melalui wisata toleransi Kampung Sawah. *PProfesi Humas Jurnal*, 6(1), 111. <https://doi.org/10.24198/prh.v6i1.31446>
- Coll-Rubio, P., & Micó, J. L. (2020). Public relations in growth hacking strategies in digital communication: the case studies of Wallapop, Westwing and Fotocasa. *Comunicacao e Sociedade*, 2020, 245–257. [https://doi.org/10.17231/comsoc.0\(2020\).2750](https://doi.org/10.17231/comsoc.0(2020).2750)
- Cronin, A. M., & Edwards, L. (2022). Resituating the political in cultural intermediary work: Charity sector public relations and communication. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 25(1), 148–165. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367549421994239>
- Ejiofo, N. E., Ngong, C. A., Josiah Chukwuemeka, O., Chuka, I., Ugbam, C. O., & Ibe, G. I. (2023). Effect of public relations planning on human resource management performance of the Independent National Electoral Commission in Nigeria. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 9(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2023.2222571>
- Gustini, L. K., Hidayat, D., Aulia, E. F., & Karamani, D. D. (2023). Cultural public relations approach to angklung bamboo musical instrument craft workshop activities. *PProfesi Humas Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Hubungan Masyarakat*, 8(1), 127. <https://doi.org/10.24198/prh.v8i1.47212>
- Hidayat, D., Kuswarno, E., Zubair, F., & Hafiar, H. (2017). THE IPPAR Model sebagai Komponen Etnografi PR pada Kajian Public Relations Berbasis Budaya. *Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi*, 15(1), 60. <https://doi.org/10.31315/jik.v15i1.2155>
- Hidayat, D., Kuswarno, E., Zubair, F., & Hafiar, H. (2018). Public relations communication behavior through a local-wisdom approach: The findings of public relations components via ethnography as methodology. *Jurnal Komunikasi: Malaysian Journal of Communication*, 34(3), 56–72. <https://doi.org/10.17576/JKMJC-2018-3403-04>
- Iskandar, O., & Tamburian, H. H. D. (2023). Public Relations Strategy in Building the Brand Image of Bloomka Local Skincare. *International Journal of Application on Social Science and Humanities*, 1(1), 135–142. <https://doi.org/10.24912/ijassh.v1i1.25748>
- Jama, K. B., Ardika, I. W., Ardhana, I. K., Setiawan, I. K., & Menggo, S. (2020). Metaphor construction in caci performance of Manggarai speech community. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 11(3), 418–426.
- Jama, K. B., & Menggo, S. (2023). The Use of Symbolic Language in Caci Aesthetic Performance, Indonesia. *International Journal of Interdisciplinary Social and Community Studies*, 18(2), 49–70. <https://doi.org/10.18848/2324-7576/CGP/v18i02/49-70>
- Karatayeva, A. (2020). Impact of Culture on Public Relations Practice in Kazakhstan. *Eurasian Union Scientists*, 5–10(74), 53–56. <https://doi.org/10.31618/esu.2413->

- 9335.2020.10.74.796
- Knell, M. (2021). The digital revolution and digitalized network society. *Review of Evolutionary Political Economy*, 2(1), 9–25. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s43253-021-00037-4>
- Kumar, P. (2022). Analysis of Communication through Traditional Folk Media for Rural Development in Rajasthan. *International Journal of Social Sciences*, 11(3), 181–188. <https://doi.org/10.46852/2249-6637.03.2022.6>
- Lazarević, S. (2023). Crisis management and communication in public relations. *Megatrend Revija*, 20(3), 121–133. <https://doi.org/10.5937/megrev23031211>
- Li, Z. (2023). Study on the Interpersonal Pragmatic Functions of Negative Game Comments and Replies from the Perspective of Relationship Management Theory: A Case Study of Twitter. *International Journal of Education and Humanities*, 8(3), 100–102. <https://doi.org/10.54097/ijeh.v8i3.8394>
- Luhur, L. V. (2020). Bentuk Ragam Hias Pada Aksesoris Pakaian Adat Tarian Caci di Desa Nenu Kecamatan Cibal Kabupaten Manggarai Tengah Nusa Tenggara Timur. *Racana: Jurnal Pendidikan Seni Dan Budaya*, 1(2), 1–9.
- Mahardika, D. A. (2020). Communication Strategy For Women Organizations In Minimizing Female Violence During Pandemic. *INJECT (Interdisciplinary Journal of Communication)*, 5(1), 41–58. <https://doi.org/10.18326/inject.v5i1.41-58>
- Mishra, R., & Newme, K. (2021). Social Communication and Traditional Folk Media of the Zeme Naga Society. *Global Media Journal – Indian Edition*, March. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3839310>
- Özoran, B. A. (2021). Postmodern culture and public relations: An analysis through campaigns. *Anadolu Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 21(4), 1051–1070.
- Poroe, H., Tompo, H. B., & Idayanti, E. (2022). Learning Strategy for Christian Education Based on Local Wisdom in Disruption Era. *The International Conference on Theology, Humanities, and Christian Education (ICONTHCE 2021)*, 669, 61–64. <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.220702.015>
- Rudiyanto, R. (2024). Peningkatan Pengetahuan Masyarakat Desa Wisata Tentang Kepariwisata Di Kabupaten Manggarai. *Jurnal Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat Makardi*, 4(1), 55–63. <https://doi.org/10.52352/makardhi.v4i1.1480>
- Sancar, G. A. (2016). What is Public Relations? An Analysis of Turkish Public Relations Job Advertisements Discourses. *Online Journal of Communication and Media Technologies*, September, 171–191.
- Tadi, N., & Nawaz Khan, M. (2021). Folk Media and Development Communication: A Study of the Bhuya Folk Form of Nyishi Tribe of Arunachal Pradesh. *International Journal of Management (IJM)*, 12(3), 253–264. <https://doi.org/10.34218/IJM.12.3.2021.023>
- Tamuli, P., & Mishra, K. (2023). *Folk Media and Social Development: A Study on Bhaona and Chhau Performing Arts*. 2(2), 135–138. <https://doi.org/10.58966/JCM20232211>
- Ünlü, S., Yasar, L., & Bilici, E. (2023). An Analysis of Cultural Heritage Preservation Efforts in Karabakh from the Perspective of Public Relations. *Erciyes İletişim Dergisi*, 10(1), 165–184. <https://doi.org/10.17680/erciyesiletisim.1167066>
- Walsh, J., Khan, A., & Ferazzoli, M. T.

- (2023). Portholes of Ethnography: The Methodological Learning from 'Being There' at a Distance. *Sociology*, 57(1), 243–252. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00380385221122458>
- Widowati, D., & Diana, R. (2018). Interpretive Analysis of Csr Implementation and Community Empowerment At Pt Krakatau Steel (Persero). *Iccd*, 1(1), 63–70. <https://doi.org/10.33068/iccd.v1i1.11>
- Xu, W., & Zammit, K. (2020). Applying Thematic Analysis to Education: A Hybrid Approach to Interpreting Data in Practitioner Research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 19, 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406920918810>
- Yayu, N., Anisti, A., Hidayat, D., & Suhadi, M. (2019). Pendekatan intercultural communication pada public relations PT Santos dalam membangun komunikasi empati. *P^{ro}fesi Humas*, 4(1), 1. <https://doi.org/10.24198/prh.v4i1.18626>
- Yemer, D. B. (2020). Traditional Folk Media for Environmental Communication and Preservation in Guna Community, Amhara, Ethiopia. *Anthropology & Ethnography*, November, 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.20944/preprints202011.0570.v1>
- Yuan, K. (2023). How to Build Enterprise Brand Image by Virtue of Crisis Public Relations? *Journal of Innovation and Development*, 4(3), 39–42. <https://doi.org/10.54097/jid.v4i3.12839>
- Zelčāne, E., & Pipere, A. (2023). Finding a path in a methodological jungle: a qualitative research of resilience. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-Being*, 18(1), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17482631.2023.2164948>