



Analysis of Indonesian Government Public Communication based on Image Restoration Theory

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ABSTRACT

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The spread of Covid-19 virus in all around the world has been happening so fast and massive. In addition, this corona virus has gotten a multidimensional crisis in the world. All countries are working hard to fight the spread of the virus either from medical side or country's policy. In Indonesia was the corona virus detected and confirmed after 4 months from the 1st case in Wuhan on November 2019. Along that 4-month period, many questions were being inquired by Indonesian legislative members about the spread of this corona virus. This journal discusses the analysis of public communication which has been performed by the Indonesian government in the face of the spreading of this Covid-19 from February to April 2020. This journal utilizes communication research which focuses on Image Restoration Theory (TIR), providing strategy in restoring image by denying strategy, evading responsibility strategy, deducting offense, corrective action and shouldering the crisis impact. he result of this research discovers that government has not been optimal to undergo the manual of crisis communication in common way, starting from confused communication message, inconsistent declaration, awkward use of social media. Eventually, government has not involved the stakeholders maximally.

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1. Introduction

The Corona virus has spread to almost all countries in the world, almost all countries have confirmed the number of deaths due to being infected with the corona virus, this virus has become a pandemic and has become a crisis for countries around the world with its strong and massive spread.

According to data from the WHO on October 31, 2020, there were 45,428,731 people who were confirmed to be exposed to the corona virus and with the death toll reaching 1,185,721 people. The virus has spread to several regions such as America with 20,311,678 confirmed positive cases, Europe with 10,803,232 confirmed cases, Southeast Asia with 9,196,384 cases, the Eastern Mediterranean with 3,067,038 confirmed cases, Africa with 1,319,279 confirmed cases and the Western Pacific 730,379 cases. Based on the data above, it shows that the existence of this corona virus has spread very widely and massively.

In Indonesia, the first positive cases of Covid-19 were found in two residents of Depok, West Java in early March 2020. The initial case in Depok occurred due to contact with foreign tourists at a cafe in the Kemang area, South Jakarta. Confirmed positive also transmitted to his mother who was in the same house so that the positive cases immediately became two. At the time of the incident, neither the residents nor the government panicked in handling the Covid-19 pandemic. From the first positive case, panic began when several other locations were also tested positive for the Covid-19 virus. Even though at that time Indonesia did not know and learn how to handle the COVID-19 pandemic because it was still very new.

The condition of the Covid-19 pandemic from the beginning of March 2020 shows that the numbers continue to rise. And this is where panic occurred when supplies of masks and hand sanitizers were quite scarce at that time. Many people then sell masks and sanitizers at relatively expensive prices. In fact, in February 2020 a number of public Figs still denied the existence of the Covid-19 virus that could enter Indonesia.

After the first case in March 2020, gradually the availability of hazmat or Personal Protective



Table 1
Government Narrative Timeline

Occurrence Time	Communicator	Message
10 Feb 2020	LuhutBinsarPanjaitan (Coordinating Minister for Maritime Affairs and Investment)	“Corona [enter Batam]? Corona, right, is gone. Car coronavirus?”
16 Feb 2020	TerawanAgusPutranto (Minister of Health)	“The masks [out of the market] are your own fault, really, buy them. Masks are for the sick
17 Feb 2020	Budi KaryaSumadi (Minister of Transportation)	“But, [this is] a joke with the President, God willing, the COVID-19 virus will not enter Indonesia because we eat cat rice every day, so we are immune”
24 Feb 2020	Doni Monardo (Head of National Disaster Management Agency)	“Could it be that we are immune from drinking herbal medicine? Or maybe it's because we've been immune from the start because we've often coughed the flu. So when there is a little virus, the virus is mental.”
24 Feb 2020	BahlilLahadalia (Head of the Investment Coordinating Board)	“He said the corona virus did not enter Indonesia because the permit was difficult”
24 Feb 2020	Achmad Yurianto (Spokesperson for Handling the Corona Virus)	“SARS-Coronavirus type 2 is different from COVID-19. The difference is more than 70 percent. So, it's not COVID-19.”
2 Mar 2020	TerawanAgusPutranto (Minister of Health)	“Remember. What we are fighting is a virus, not bacteria, you know. Viruses are self-limited diseases. This means that self-limited disease is self-healing. It's okay, it heals on its own.”
2 Mar 2020	TerawanAgusPutranto (Minister of Health)	“You see, the Minister of Health is really confident. I'm sure that what we have to deal with, Corona is not something that is scary or extraordinary. What is scary is the news.”
3 Mar 2020	TerawanAgusPutranto (Minister of Health)	“The death rate is 2 percent, very small. Bigger coughs and colds that can cause death”
11 Mar 2020	Ma'ruf Amin (Vice President of the Republic of Indonesia)	“It turns out that there is something here that can ward off the corona offered by the Governor, namely wild horse milk”
15 Mar 2020	Joko Widodo (President of the Republic of Indonesia)	“.....that one of your Ministers was detected as infected with Covid-19, with this condition it is time for us to work from home, study at home and worship at home”
18 Mar 2020	Achmad Yurianto (Spokesperson for Handling the Corona Virus)	“The WHO's proposal to conduct mass testing for COVID-19 was accepted. The problem is whether it is executed or not, that will be later. Because there are conditions that apply if you want to run it ”
19 Mar 2020	Joko Widodo (President of the Republic of Indonesia)	“I ask for the rapid test kits to continue to be reproduced as well as to increase the number of places to carry out tests and involve hospitals, both the government, state-owned enterprises, regional governments...”

Occurrence Time	Communicator	Message
20 Mar 2020	Joko Widodo (President of the Republic of Indonesia)	"The government is also preparing drugs from the results of research and experiences from several countries so that they can be used to deal with this COVID-19....."
24 Mar 2020	Joko Widodo (President of the Republic of Indonesia)	"I have ordered all ministers, governors, mayors and regents to cut down on non-priority spending plans....."
31 Mar 2020	Joko Widodo (President of the Republic of Indonesia)	"The government has designated COVID-19 as a type of disease with risk factors that can cause a public health emergency. And the government establishes a public health emergency status."
April 2, 2020	LuhutBinsarPanjaitan	"The weather at the equator of Indonesia, which is hot and has high humidity, is not strong enough for Covid-19."

Source: Processed by the Author (Youtube, Narasi Newsroom, April 11, 2020)

The dynamics of public communication in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic, especially in the performance of the first quarter of the pandemic in Indonesia, can give a negative response if it is not conveyed correctly and with valid data. From several explanations of government public Figs in the February - April 2020 period, the author analyzes public communication activities based on Image Restoration Theory.

The author feels it is important to analyze public communication activities in the first quarter of the pandemic in Indonesia because at the beginning it can shape public perceptions about government. If in the community a sense of trust is formed in public communication, then handling activities will be more easily carried out with this support. However, if public trust is lacking in perception at the beginning of the incident, this can be a challenge for the government in handling cases of the Covid-19 pandemic. It can be interpreted that it is not a public communication activity that is wrong or right, but it can be seen how the next activity from the discussion of public communication analysis based on this Image Restoration Theory.

2. Research Method

In this study, the researcher used a qualitative method with the constructivism paradigm with a text analysis approach (Discourse analysis). The research data source is based on Youtube (Narasi Newsroom, April 11, 2020).

The goal of constructivism is to rely as much as possible on the views of the participants about a given situation. Often these subjective meanings are negotiated socially and historically. In other words, the variety of reality is built through interactions in social life and through historical and cultural norms that apply in the life of the individual. Researchers create inductively develop theories or patterns of meaning (Creswell, 2015). In this study, we will discuss more about the participants expressed by public communications which are well known in Indonesia.

In general, content analysis seeks to reveal various information behind the data presented in the media or text. Content analysis can be defined as a technique of collecting and analyzing the content of a text. "content" in this case can be words, meanings (meanings), pictures, symbols, ideas, themes, or some messages that can be communicated (Neuman, 2003).

According to Bungin (2012), content analysis is a research technique to make inferences that can be imitated and valid on data by taking into account the context. Content analysis deals with communication or the content of communication. In qualitative research, content analysis is emphasized on how researchers see the context of the content of communication qualitatively, on how researchers interpret the content of communication, read symbols, interpret the contents of symbolic interactions that occur in communication.

From Neuman and Bungin's statement, researchers analyzed the information and narrative behind the texts submitted by public officials in conveying public communications in the mass media in the case of the Covid-19 pandemic that captured the attention of the Indonesian people and the world.



3. Research Results and Discussion

This study discusses the government's public communication strategy during the COVID-19 pandemic through the Image Restoration Theory strategy which was initiated by William Benoit in 1995. In this paper, the author analyzes and criticizes public statements submitted by state Figs in dealing with the pandemic crisis in the first quarter. from events in Indonesia, namely during the months of February-April 2020. This analysis can also be a determinant of public communication activities at a later stage where if there is an inappropriate message condition, improvements can be made or maximize public communication activities in order to achieve a win-win solution for the country. as well as society.

Since the emergence of the virus in November 2019, the government has not responded to this phenomenon. Until finally a new statement was submitted in early February 2020.

The author discusses the statements made by several Figs in the period from February to April 2020 which still show the slow response to the crisis, especially at the pre-crisis stage until the crisis occurs. The pre-crisis stage is the most important stage in deciding which crisis communication activities will be used later.

In addition, public communication is expected to have received crisis communication training because when a crisis occurs, it is a condition that cannot be decided by the individual but the team. Crisis communication preparedness before a crisis occurs is one of the most important preventive measures for the sustainability of organizations, companies, institutions and so on.

If we look at public communication activities in handling the Covid-19 pandemic crisis, in February 2020 there was still denial from the government and confirmed that the corona virus would not enter Indonesia as stated by LuhutBinsarPanjaitan, Coordinating Minister for Maritime Affairs and Investment on 10 February 2020 which is "Corona [enter Batam]? Corona, right, is gone. Car coronavirus?" (Narration, 2020, April 11).

In the span of this February, the Indonesian government's public communication is still in the first strategy, namely denial. In this strategy, the Indonesian government's public communications deny that a similar incident occurred in Indonesia, as previously stated by LuhutBinsarPanjaitan. In fact, extensive information about the handling of this virus outbreak is starting to be accessible, especially news in international media, one of which is the use of masks as a form of anticipating the transmission of the virus.

Still in the same month, namely February 2020, TerawanAgusPutranto, Minister of Health of the Republic of Indonesia is also still carrying out the same denial strategy carried out by other Ministers. As for February 16, 2020, Terawan said, "The masks [out in the market] are your own fault, really, buy them. Masks are for the sick" (Narasi, 2020, April 11). Until mid-February 2020, the discussion of the Covid-19 virus was still a polemic that it was unlikely that this virus would enter Indonesia.

On February 17, 2020, Budi KaryaSumadi, Minister of Transportation of the Republic of Indonesia said "But, [this is] a joke with the President, God willing, the COVID-19 virus will not enter Indonesia because every day we eat cat rice, so we are immune" (Narasi, 2020, April 11). Still in the middle of February 2020, the government of the Republic of Indonesia is still in the denial strategy stage. It was continued by Doni Monardo, Head of the National Disaster Management Agency of the Republic of Indonesia on February 24, 2020 that "Is it possible that we are immune from drinking herbal medicine? Or maybe it's because we've been immune from the start because we've often coughed the flu. So when there is a little virus, the virus is mental" (Narasi, 2020, April 11). Then on the same date, BahlilLahadalia, The Head of the Investment Coordinating Board of the Republic of Indonesia also conveyed the same strategy, namely "They say the corona virus did not enter Indonesia because the permit is difficult" (Narasi, 2020, April 11). Until the end of February 2020, the Indonesian government's public communication was still in the denial stage.

Still on February 14, 2020, through Achmad Yurianto, Spokesperson for Handling the Corona Virus, public communication carried out by the Indonesian government is still in a denial strategy, namely the statement from the Spokesperson for Handling the Corona Virus, "SARS-Coronavirus type 2 is different from COVID-19. The difference is more than 70 percent. So, this is not COVID-19" (Narasi, 2020, April 11).

In early March there were two statements from the government's public incense sticks that were included in the strategy for evasion of responsibility. On March 2, 2020, the Indonesian Minister of Health stated, "Remember. What we are fighting is a virus, not bacteria, you know. Viruses are self-limited diseases. This means that self-limited disease is self-healing. It's okay to heal on its own" (Narasi, 2020, April 11).

Continuing on the same date, Terawan said, "You see, the Minister of Health is really confident. I'm sure that what we have to deal with, Corona is not something that is scary or extraordinary. What is scary is the news" (Narasi, 2020, April 11). And on March 3, 2020, Terawan again said, "The death rate is 2 percent, very small. More coughing and colds that can cause death (Narasi, 2020, April 11)" In 2 days, three statements from the Minister of Health of the Republic of Indonesia were included in the strategy to avoid responsibility (evasion of responsibility). On the same date, positive Indonesian cases began to enter with the discovery of two Indonesian citizens who were positive for Covid-19.

Starting in mid-March 2020, the next strategy, according to Image Restoration Theory, is that the government of the Republic of Indonesia enters a strategy of reducing the offensiveness, as evidenced by the statement of Ma'ruf Amin, the Vice President of the Republic of Indonesia, "It turns out that there is someone here who can ward off the corona offered by the Governor. namely wild horse milk" on March 11, 2020 (Narasi, 2020, April 11).

The quick action taken by the Indonesian government was carried out on a corrective action strategy, with the statement of Joko Widodo, President of the Republic of Indonesia on March 15, 2020, ".....that one of your Ministers was detected as infected with Covid-19, with the condition this is the time for us to work from home, study at home and worship at home" (Narasi, 2020, April 11). Strengthened by the corrective action strategy according to the Image Restoration Theory, Achmad Yurianto conveyed that the WHO's proposal to conduct a mass test for Covid-19 was received by the Indonesian government on March 18, 2020.

Still in the corrective action strategy, March 19, 2020, Joko Widodo said "I ask for the rapid test kits to continue to be reproduced as well as to increase the number of places to conduct tests and involve hospitals, both government, BUMN, local government..." (Narasi, 2020, April 11). And on the next day, Joko Widodo said, "The government is also preparing drugs from the results of research and experiences from several countries so that they can be used to deal with this COVID-19....." as a corrective action strategy according to the Image Restoration Theory (Narasi, 2020, April 11).)

Right towards the end of the month, 3 weeks after the first positive case of covid-19 was identified in Indonesia, President Joko Widodo carried out the mortification strategy stage with a statement on March 24, 2020, "I have ordered all Ministers, Governors, Mayors and Regents to cut out non-priority spending plans....." (Narasi, 2020, April 11). Continuing the stage of the mortification strategy, President Joko Widodo said, "The government has determined COVID-19 as a type of disease with risk factors that cause public health emergencies. And the government stipulates a public health emergency status."

Five communication strategies (typologies) to restore an image built based on a rhetorical approach were implemented by the Indonesian government within two months (February – March 2020) in the face of the COVID-19 crisis. However, on April 2, 2020, public communication returned to the denial stage which was conveyed by LuhutBinsarPanjaitan on April 2, 2020, "The weather at the Indonesian equator, which is hot and has high humidity, is not strong enough for covid-19" (Narasi, 2020, April 11).

4. Conclusions

Broadly speaking, based on the analysis and criticism that has been described previously, the conclusion of this study is that the Indonesian government's public communication problems that took place during the February-April 2020 period were caused by the absence of a sense of crisis owned by all state apparatus. So that when the Covid-19 crisis began to occur in Indonesia, there was a lot of biased information that appeared in public conversations plus the many statements made by several state officials further added to the chaos of the flow of public information and ultimately created public anxiety.

Sense of crisis which is not owned by the State apparatus is exacerbated by conditions that were not previously predicted, both in case analysis to mitigating the handling of public trust. Not only in Indonesia, but also in several other countries, there are still many mistakes in delivering the crisis due to the Covid-19 pandemic, which is happening for the first time. Each State official expresses an opinion without the coordination of a single message by the government. However, there are also some countries that can convey public communication well so that handling is easier to do.

In this case, it is necessary to have a unified message conveyed by the ranks of government public Figs. Public communication activities are in accordance with Image Restoration Theory with a period of 2 months, but return to the first strategy in the denial strategy. If it is continued with a long-term mortification strategy,

it will be even better with the support of relevant data.

Although the Indonesian government finally appointed a spokesperson to convey various kinds of information related to the development of the covid-19 pandemic, the fact is that the appointment of a spokesperson who is not a public relations practitioner is still not effective in conveying information to the public and seems to have created new controversies. Overall, the government should have a special Public Relations institution as a profession, not only as a function, because the government needs a practitioner who understands and understands the dynamics of crisis communication.

Sharing the flow of public communication messages is also necessary in line with the diversity of communication media channels used. With the target of millennial public interest and trust in using social media, the public over 40 years of age use print and television communication media to obtain information. In this case, the government has disseminated information in an appropriate and massive manner, with the age range of the message recipients above 40 years.

During these crisis conditions, the government must be able to build digital infrastructure that can show real time data related to the development of COVID-19 information. In line with that, the Government needs to take advantage of the use of social media in collaboration with public Figs or influencers. Social media occupies the largest portion for millennials to find information. Through public communication messages in handling crises delivered on social media, it is hoped that it will give rise to trust and interest in social media users, especially millennials.

In addition to the use of various communication media, public Figs or influencers who collaborate with the government must understand the meaning of the message of any information that will be conveyed to the public, meaning that the message conveyed must be in accordance with the target. So back to the previous recommendation that a special Public Relations institution is needed in handling public communication so that it is right on target and has the right message. It is hoped that the existence of this special Public Relations institution can help increase the interest and trust of the general public, with a record that the data submitted is also through verification so that the information submitted is reliable. There is the delivery of correct public communication messages,

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