

Disinformation and Miscommunication in Government Communication in Handling COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

This study explores how the Indonesian government uses websites to respond to public information as the COVID-19 pandemic has developed into a global crisis. The government is expected to act quickly and decisively in responding to the public's communication and information crisis. Communication is becoming the most crucial part, especially when it comes to delivering the facts. The accuracy of the information provided also plays a significant role in shaping public perception of the situation. Data obtained were gathered from the central government and provincial government regions' official report, analyzed using SimilarWeb: Website Traffic. The findings showed that the Indonesian government did not have enough response tools set up in the event of a viral outbreak, was not well prepared in the event of communicating with the international community in the event of such an outbreak, and did not have integrated actions to be made between the central government and the second regional government in managing their response. As for the data provided by the central and regional governments, the data have now gone public, showing how good it is.

Keywords

COVID-19, Government Communication, Disinformation, Hoax.

Introduction

During the crisis, citizens' involvement is critical, either in making contributions or providing the government with correct information. (Venkatesh, Hoehle, & Aljafari, 2017). By doing so, fear, confusion, and anxiety among citizens can be minimized during a critical time. It will also realize public needs' recognition (Malawani, Nurmandi, Purnomo, & Rahman, 2020). Public communication is a tool for the government to increase the government's public awareness of self-reliance and public awareness and enhance public services' capacity to process information flows and determine what public services will be provided to the public. (Chatfield & Reddick, 2018; del Mar Galvez-Rodríguez, Haro-de-Rosario, García-- Tabuyo, & Caba-Perez, 2013). A country's public participation is based on citizens' involvement in public affairs, which aims to build relationships and trust outside of the mere exchange of information (Fleischmann, Aritz, & Cardon, 2020). The government implements a holistic approach to building state involvement, uniting and integrating public involvement in all political activities, combining public policy argument, and increasing public confidence in transparency and facilitating transparent decision making (Agostino & Arnaboldi, 2016). Due to its accessibility, discussion and participatory nature, the website provides a significant advantage in providing synchronous and collaborative contacts between the community and government, creating new momentum in the government conducting public engagement. (Agostino & Arnaboldi, 2016).

The government is engaged in policy throughout the world, opening hands by expanding its potential to spread the community's involvement in crisis management. The United Kingdom government uses Twitter features like designations and hashtags to communicate with the broader community to explain the conditions and confirm all positive and negative news during the 2011 protest (Panagiotopoulos, Bigdeli, & Sams, 2014). One example of the use case and the importance of media richness in Indonesia is the use of Twitter to build and develop communities to deliver initial approval messages during the 2012 tsunami and also to optimize them in the provision of public information services. (Chatfield, Scholl, & Brajawidagda, 2013). In the UK, the British government used Twitter during the Hurricane Sandy 2012 disaster to provide information and involve the community in improving community programs (Chatfield & Reddick, 2018). How the state responds to a case can be seen in the participation of its citizens. The involvement of sharing information through social media can be measured through social media (Elbanna, Bunker, Levine, & Sleigh, 2019).

An absence of government public education creates situations of chaos and crisis in government social education media(GSEM). First, most governments only use social media as a supplement, but it remains insignificant in its use, and it does not encourage citizen engagement. (Neely & Collins, 2018; Wukich, 2016). Governing agencies use their websites to post alerts and recommendations, but none use participatory approaches to facilitate cooperation and interaction between people and governments (Neely & Collins, 2018; Wukich, 2016), interactive two-way contact. Government Social Media (GSM) remained at the surface level, such as restricted comments and insufficient dialogue (Tang, Zhang, Xu, & Vo, 2015). For the first time, China reported the existence of this new disease on December 31st, 2019. At the end of 2019, the World Health Organization (WHO) Office in China received an unknown type of pneumonia. Acute respiratory infection that attacked the lungs was detected in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China. According to the authorities, some patients were traders operating in the Huanan Fish Market (Zhu et al., 2020).

During the coronavirus pandemic, the community sees the government's website as a "strategic tool" and "the latest media" to provide information and communicate matters relating to COVID-19 services (Karkin & Janssen, 2014). At present, the government is competing in various ways to provide information related to COVID-19 and quote from kawalCOVID-19.id there are 18 (eighteen) COVID-19 websites owned by province/district governments in Indonesia. This situation sometimes confuses people because of differences in data and information from each website (Purnomo et al., 2021). The emphasis is on copying some visual functionality rather than representing the values that underlie them. Public values such as accessibility, responsiveness, uniformity, accountability, the balance of interests, equality and privacy form the basis of a democratic system that must be disclosed by government websites (Shai, Stanley, Granell, Taylor, & Mucha, 2017). The method used in this research was the descriptive qualitative method, where the researchers took data from the central and local government COVID-19 websites.

In handling COVID-19, the Indonesian government still has many shortcomings, especially in providing information about the number of positives, recoveries, negatives, or other information related to the pandemic to the public. In other words, this study tries to look at the difference in the local government's official website and the central government's official website is clearly visible. There is a great difference in numbers which creates confusion and the public is lost looking for more precise information. The study focuses on Indonesia's government in Jakarta and West Java, and how much information differed between Banten and other regions. This study aims to show that

media richness is essential for the government to ward off confusing news or hoaxes, and ensure that the public is provided with correct information to avoid social media scams.

Theoretical Foundations and Hypotheses

Theoretical Foundations

1. Media Richness Theory (MRT) and Hoaxes

The Media Richness Theory (MRT) by Daft and Lengel (1986) emphasizes the possible value of communications media knowledge, which emphasizes the opportunity to encourage common meanings (Daft & Lengel, 1986). Definitions of media diversity discuss the reliability of reviews, various metrics, cultural gaps and personal interest (Daft, Lengel, & Trevino, 1987). Daft et al. (1987) identify four forms of media resources from left to the right: face-to-face contact, internet, written documents and unprocessed information. This hypothesis highlights that higher media richness is not necessarily better; it depends on the particular quality of the company's activities (Daft et al., 1987). In other words, when media richness matches the task, the best effect can be obtained. The diverse and quick development of new media technologies helps establish multimedia content easier. Types of media used include text, images and videos, while media complexity ranges from simple to more complex (Denktas, -S, Akar and Sürücü, 2018; Yue, Thelen, Robinson, & Men, 2019). Twitter users usually extend what they wish to convey by adding additional content, such as pictures or images, regardless of the word cap (Lee & Xu, 2018). The proper and accurate distribution of arbovirus data will reduce the transmission of pandemics and workforce-related issues. The Zika virus pandemic research looked at the successful use of social media platforms on Google (Google Inc., Menlo Park, CA) as an information source (Sharma, Yadav, Yadav, & Ferdinand, 2017). It is often measured by the reliability of the source and the accuracy of the statement, in addition to the cognitive dissonance that is policed by knowledge-truthful or false.

Source competency has a good impact on morale as well. After accounting for biases and motivated reasoning, the aim is to exchange knowledge about the help source's reliability and help the news source (Suntwal, Brown, & Patton, 2020). Capitalization does not achieve career success. Still, five factors continue to matter overall. Such variables include the medium for information collection, the essence of sharing information, the impact of social forces, the knowledge base of expertise, and individuals' capacity to enable or complete the complexity and details required to access pertinent information, related challenges, ambiguities, subjectivities and meanings can be solved not only by using medium's features but also by smelling and the design suggested illustrates

sensation production to shape, and approximate related information and all parameters participate actively in obtaining the outcomes of the assignment. Ultimately, social media involves people who exchange knowledge, their personalities and lives and exchanging related content is an important place to explore (Adjei, Tweneboah, & Tobbin, 2020). Focusing on the COVID-19 pandemic, which was first recorded in December 2019 in China, this research further examines CEGSM's development process during public health crises. Work on social media by public relations researchers has shown that dialog values are significant determinants of the impact of online communication (GálvezRodríguez et al., 2018). This study used Media Richness Theory (MRT) on Indonesians' involvement and trust on the COVID-19 website (www.COVID19.go.id) during the COVID-19 crisis. More importantly, this study further investigates the role of emotional valence moderation to reveal the mechanism of its specific influence and lack of resources. ICTs are an essential way to tackle those problems. The website has emerged as an effective way of identifying and describing crisis conditions, making policy statements and taking meaningful measures for governments and people (Panagiotopoulos et al., 2014). Police departments have used the website in different countries to introduce information and crisis management (Chatfield & Reddick, 2018). Government agencies have traditionally used the internet during emergencies to reveal information, track public actions and attitudes, regulate and quash rumors, encourage crowdsourcing and collaboration, create social unity, organize capital flows and foster academic work (Alexander, 2014; Tang et al., 2015; Zhang, Fan, Yao, Hu, & Mostafavi, 2019). Established that US state departments use official website pages to report details at various points of a crisis, send early warning notices, monitor and policy acts, casualties, closing and restoration of services, aid supply and planning, clarification of disinformation, public funding, awareness, training, views and comments (Chen et al., 2020).

Method

December 2019, a world-wide epidemic emerged in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China. New cases were unknown and unconfirmed in world health. This disease is an acute respiratory disease caused by a new type of coronavirus (Dewi et al., 2020). On February 11th, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) changed the name of this disease, COVID-19. This study takes the COVID-19 crisis as a case because of its nature as a global pandemic and a significant threat to human life and health. According to a WHO report on March 23rd, 2020, the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases were 332,930 globally, with more than 190 countries/regions affected. The number of deaths exceeded 14,500.

On March 2nd, 2020, the first case of COVID-19 appeared in Indonesia. Since the first case was announced, the number of positive cases of COVID-19 has continued to surge (Dewi et al., 2020). By June of 2020, there were 1,677 positive cases of COVID-19. In addition, there were as many as 103 and as many as 157 other patients died. The figure was calculated as significantly large, considering the first case occurred recently. Since the coronavirus has been discovered in Indonesia, it has caused over a thousand infections (Dewi et al., 2020).

After a surge of 19 positive patients, the Indonesian government adopted a policy to suppress this crisis, intended to create a COVID-19 website that aims to show COVID-19 data and provide adequate information to avoid lying about COVID-19. The data taken in this study came from the central COVID website and the regional COVID-19 website. The local governments taken were DKI Jakarta, West Java, and Banten. These three regions were chosen because they have been COVID-19 red zone, and many cases in these three regions. From March 1st, 2020, until June 30th, 2020, after the data were taken, the researchers used "similar web analytics tools" to analyze Total Visits, Top Referring Sites, and Social Media (Purnomo et al., 2021).. After the data were obtained, the researchers conducted an analysis using descriptive qualitative methods.

Campaign efforts were to conduct self-quarantine during this pandemic. This research focuses on the Indonesian government's official COVID-19 website under the name "www.COVID19.go.id" There are several reasons: first, the www.COVID19.go.id website is the official website of the Indonesian government; second, the website this official will be a reference for social media in disseminating information regarding COVID-19; third, it is a highly regulated government website to block hoaxes.

Result

In the Indonesian context, the central government and regional governments provide information related to data numbers confirmed using web media. The total number of websites from the central and local governments with their domains is 100 websites. The web consists of 1 central government, 18 regional governments at the provincial level and 81 local governments at the district and city level. Many websites make the data and information less useful given between the city/district governments, the provincial government, or the central government. This situation causes the information uncertain obtained by the public.

From the whole website, the researchers took 4 samples with details of 1 central government and 3 local governments with the provisions that the number of patients confirmed COVID-19 in the sample areas was the region with the most patients in Indonesia from March 1st, 2020 to June 30th, 2020.

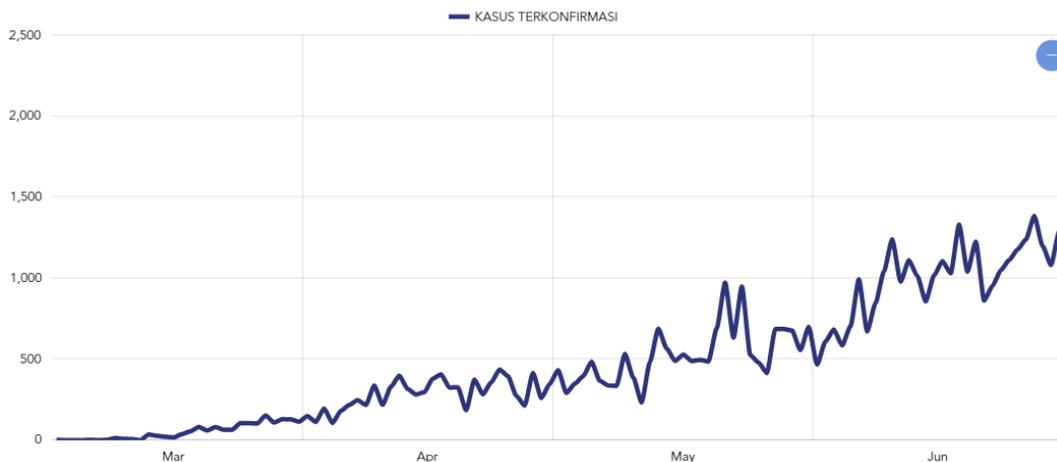


Figure 1 Confirmed COVID-19 Cases in Indonesia

Figure 1 shows data on the number of confirmed COVID-19 patients in Indonesia on the central government website, increasing day by day. The increase in the number of confirmed cases in Indonesia on June 30th reached 64.958 cases, making people need credible and accurate information. Figure 1 will be survivable in Figures 2, 3, 4, and 5. As a result, it can be seen how data can display the correlation between MRT and deception in Indonesia. The correlation can then be shown in Figure 6.

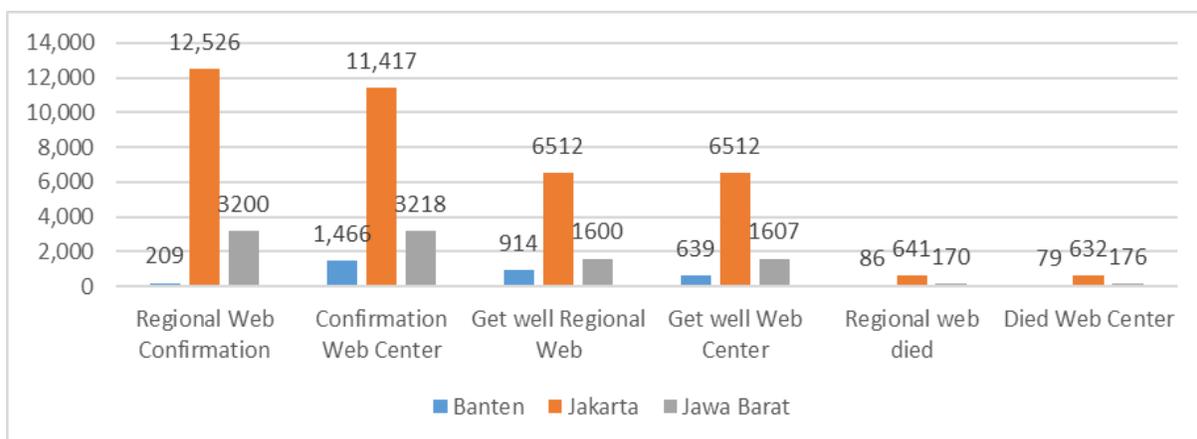


Figure 2 The differences between the Central Government and Regional Report

Figure 2 shows a positive patient of COVID-19 from two different government web sources. Figure 2 is referenced from the COVID-19 website of the central government and

the COVID-19 website in every region infected by COVID-19, with a significant amount in Indonesia. Figure 1 shows data on the number of patients confirmed by COVID-19 from the center website and from the Banten Province, Jakarta and West Java websites on the same date on June 30th, 2020. Seeing the confirmed data between the central and local governments, the difference in COVID-19 DKI Jakarta websites revealed 12,526 confirmed cases. In comparison, the central government COVID-19 sites were 11,417 cases with no difference in 1000 confirmed cases. Similar to West Java and Banten, in the case of patients who recovered. Between the site data, COVID-19 central government and Jakarta and West Java website showed the same result, but different from Banten. The mortality number had 10 different confirmed cases between the central government and the local government. The situation above happened due to the lack of synchronization between the central and local governments in providing information relating to COVID-19.



Figure 3 Number of Central and Provincial Government COVID-19 Website Visitation

For accessibility, a central government or regional government website is relatively easy to access where there is no problem accessing the website. It can be proved by the number of people who access this website as much as 5.1 million for the central government website, 2,650,000 for DKI province, and 1,050,000 for the province of West Java and 100,000 for the province of Banten. Website Garry Banten is the least visited. The data show that the central government website is still the primary source seen by Indonesians in obtaining information related to the COVID-19 compared to regional websites. The involvement of residents on the website can be seen below.

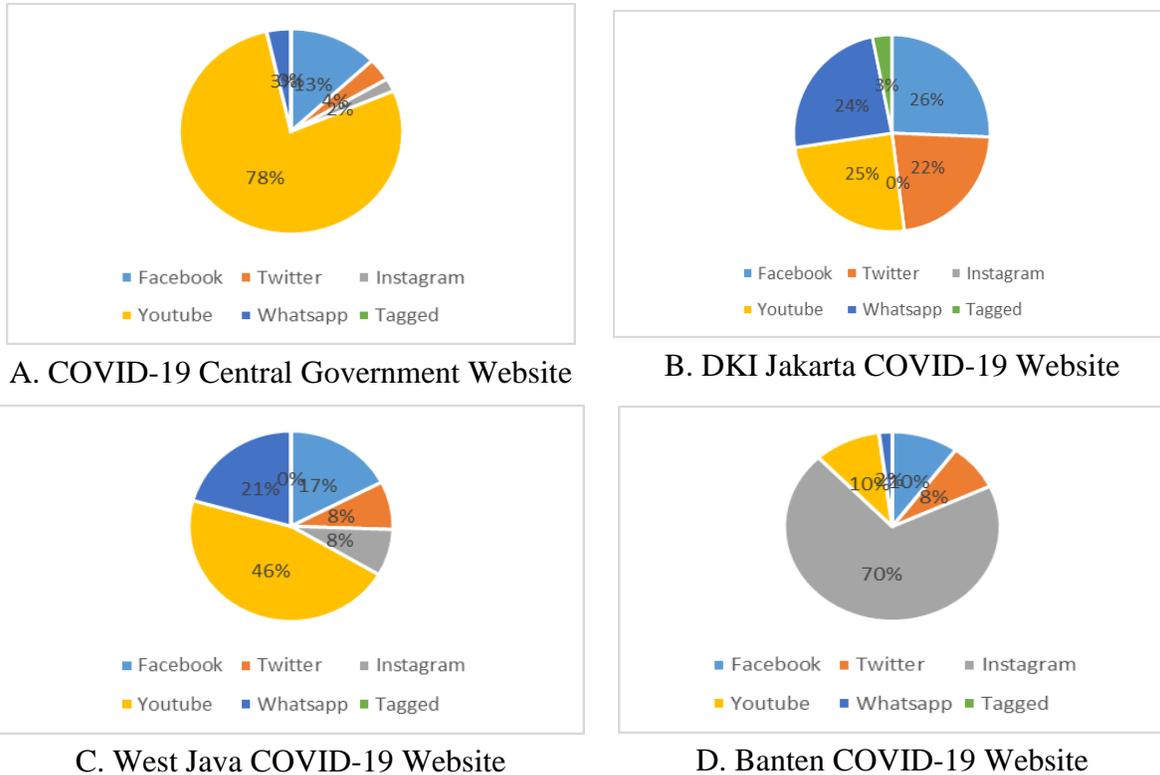


Figure 4 Citizen Involvement in National and Regional Social Media Websites

Figure 4 shows that citizen involvement through social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp. There are 5 (five) social media on the three websites, but only the Banten website only 3 (three) social media as a means of citizen involvement. Facebook thrives in citizen engagement on three websites, namely the central website 42% in Figure 4(A) and the West Java website 41% in Figure 4 (C). Simultaneously, citizens' participation via Twitter is 67% higher in DKI Jakarta than in Figure 4 (B) and 43% higher in Figure 4 (D). Looking at the overall picture, Facebook and Twitter are becoming the primary citizen engagement tool. In addition to Facebook and Twitter, there is YouTube, an intermediary tool for citizens' involvement in reading data from the COVID-19 website. On the YouTube central website, it becomes a tool for citizen involvement by 12% of 5 social media in Figure 4 (A), DKI Jakarta website by 11% from 5 social media in figure 4 (B), West Java website by 16% from 5 social media in figure 4 (C), and Banten website at 25% of the 3 social media in Figure 4 (D).

In contrast to Instagram and WhatsApp as social media, the two social media are only a tool of citizen involvement on 3 websites tested, namely the Instagram center website 20% and 9% of the 5 social media in figure 4 (A), DKI Jakarta Instagram 1 website % and WhatsApp 9% of 5 social media in Figure 4 (B), and West Java website Instagram 3% and WhatsApp 10% of 5 social media in Figure 4 (C).

Seeing social media percentage data as a tool for citizen involvement in referring COVID-19 data has made Media Richness Theory necessary and been a serious concern because of the absence of asynchronous data between the center and the regions coupled with the absence of certainty of correct data will make the data received by society ambiguous and confusing. The community will reduce the government's level of trust because it has failed to provide specific data and find a third source, which, according to some people, is considered correct. The absence of MRT in communicating on the media website makes the information conveyed to the broader community not received intact. Communities will speculate with each other about their thoughts, and the impact will create panic. It can be seen that the government must pay attention to the MRT in communicating media on the website.

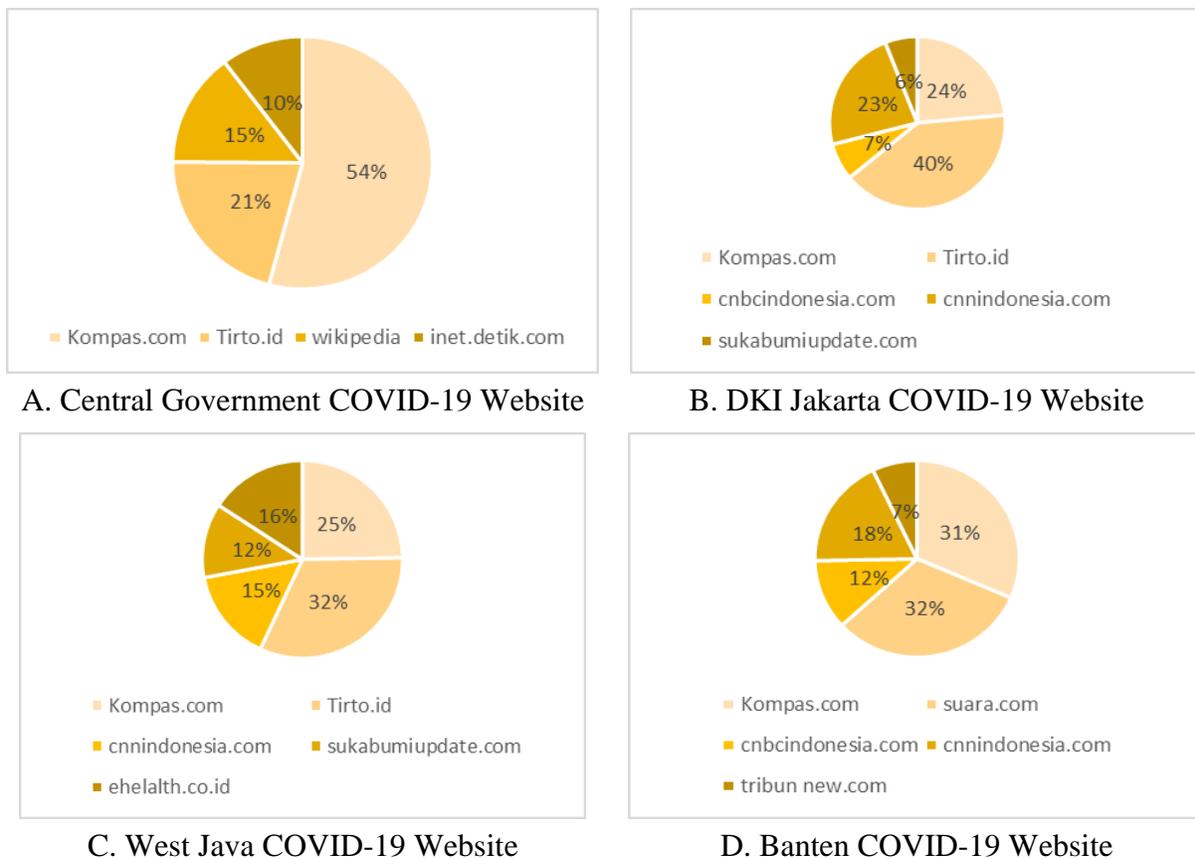


Figure 5 Socials Media Advisor in DKI Jakarta, and Banten

Figure 5 finds that the COVID-19 website of the central government in Figure 5 (A) is dominated by online media Kompas.com in referring data compared to other media. As for the DKI Jakarta COVID-19 website in Figure 5 (B), local governments' data are more frequently referenced by the online media Tirto.id compared to other media. The equation is also found on the COVID-19 website of the West Java regional government in Figure 5

(C). The regional government's data are more frequently referenced by *tirto.id* than *kompas.com*, which more often refers to the COVID-19 website owned by the central government in figure 5 (A). The same circumstance also happened to the data found on the COVID-19 website of the Banten regional government in figure 5 (D). The search results showed that the Banten City COVID-19 data was more frequently referenced by the online media *Suara.com* while *kompas.com* ranked 2nd. On the COVID-19 website owned by Banten regional government in figure 5 (D), it was also found that the online media *tirto.id*, which more often refers to the DKI Jakarta regional government website and the West Java regional government, was not found to be part of the online media refer to the Banten regional government website.

The above data show that the data's confusion and uncertainty can make online media online news disseminating machines experience confusion and inequality in referring to data (Salsabila & Purnomo, 2017). News results released by online media will differ due to differences in reference. The absence of Media Richness Theory results in poor communication by the government towards online media trying to become media to spread its news. Between online media, one another has their respective beliefs about the truth of the data. If the government does not resolve this by paying attention to Media Richness Theory, online media in the future can refer to third parties in providing data services. In contrast, the truth of data from third parties is also questionable.

Third-party intervention makes conditions for handling COVID-19 become increasingly chaotic and can eliminate the government's legitimacy as the primary source of information delivery to the public. This scope will be discussed later in the next chapter related to the relationship between MRT and Hoaxes.

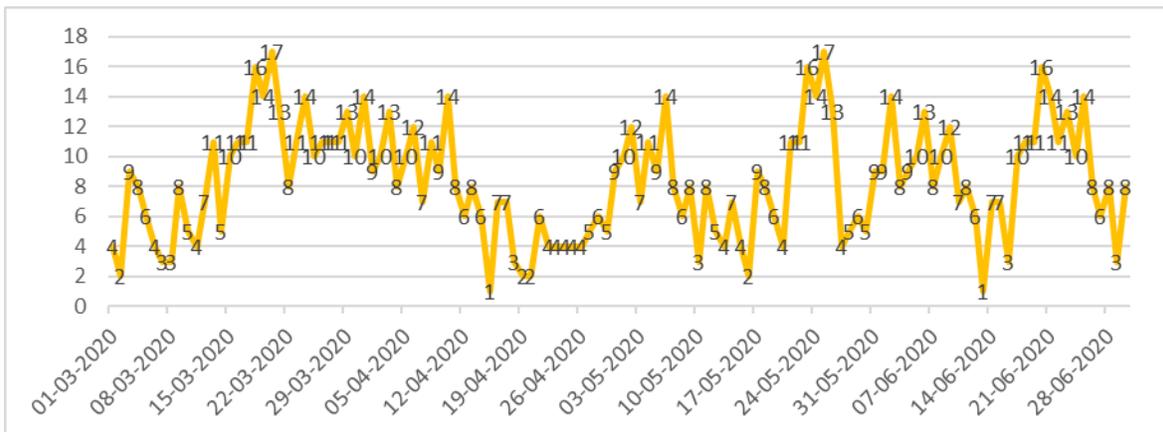


Figure 6 Number of posts confirmed by the central government version of hoaxes

Figure 6 indicates the number of hoax news about the COVID-19 on the official web of the Republic of Indonesia's Ministry of Communications and Information Technology. Table 5 indicates that hoaxes are high during the 1998's COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia. The chart illustrates that over the course of ten days, the most hoaxes occurred on March 3rd. While June 30, 2020, the hoax number shows a significant jump and a decline of the COVID-19 hoax cases. Hoax news covers and reports the most extensive variety of cases and unconfirmed cases of the disease.

Discussion

Findings from research related to the COVID-19 website owned by the central government and the regional COVID-19 website showed that the central government website and the regional government website presented different data. This result shows the ambiguity of the government's information. According to MRT, uncertainty (equivocality) is one condition for the need for rich media. The second data in Figure 2 above defines the need for good media reliability, making it easier for the public and the media to refer to it (Purnomo et al., 2021).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, people's information needs were overwhelming (Purnomo et al., 2021). They want accurate, transparent, and sufficient information. It is hoped that the government website, as one of the platforms created by the government, can provide accurate information amid the many hoax news that is happening on social media. Transparency, as a determining factor of closeness and confidentiality, has completely changed due to the disclosure of public information with the issuance of Law No. 14 of 2008, the government has initiated and developed institutional websites in carrying out and public administration needs and as well as supporting the disclosure of information to the public (Dewi et al., 2020). The government website has become the main method used by the government to communicate with the citizen. The four websites provide the public with information about the situation of COPD in Indonesia. Balancing interests refers to the degree to which a website can give the same weight to the needs of residents or users and administrative needs in the information provided through the websites of the four websites that have the least balanced interest about meeting the specific needs of citizens when designing their websites. In essence, most websites focus on the administrative perspective which is not necessarily the users' perspective.

Second, the findings of Figure 3 have shown the number of viewers of each central and local government website that is used as a reference by the public, social media, and online media. Figure 5 reinforces that MRT is needed to present web media data by the

central and regional governments. The ambiguity and uncertainty of the data provided will result in an incorrect understanding of information by data consumers or viewers (Purnomo et al., 2021).. The issue of public consumption, but the data related to COVID-19 above also becomes a reference for online media and social media in providing information to the broader public, which is seen in the data findings in Figures 4 and 5.

Social media and online cannot be blamed in this regard. Social media and online also experienced confusion in making data maps provided by the government. Both based on the data provided between the central and regional government websites differ in number. If the central government does not immediately address the data differences in Figure 2, it will create a bad situation. Online and social media in the future cannot refer to websites provided by the central and regional governments (Purnomo et al., 2021)... The two media will look for a third source in providing data to the public. The result will result in an unpleasant situation. The conclusion that hoax production is higher. Any information that is not appropriate for the situation will contribute to a more chaotic situation and increase the government's burden in dealing with the pandemic. This report cannot be used if it is coupled with another study or data. The public will become increasingly confused and indecisive, and will not have any readily available information to make purchasing decisions.

Third, the hypothesis related to MRT influencing hoax's is strengthened by showing the findings in Figure 7, which shows that hoaxes' production from March 1st, 2020 to June 30th, 2020 is always high. Production of COVID-19 related hoax never stops every day. This condition causes hoax in social media and in the real world to continue to grow. Third parties' games cause this condition for the uncertainty of the data presented by the government. It is not only the lack of clarity in the data that causes the production of hoax to be higher, but too much authority and is not integrated with issuing COVID-19 data is also a supporting factor for an increase in the number of hoaxes. There is no good communication between the central and regional governments and no joint data when presenting COVID-19 data to the public, both ordinary people, by online and conventional social media and online news media.

The findings from Figures 1 to 7 explain that uncertainty of information provided by the government resulted in massive hoaxes in society. The central and local governments' different information makes online media and society lose the direction in taking valid sources of information, making the news invalid and confirms from Source 3 to be a reference by online media and public.

It is this error in retrieving this information that makes hoaxes increase during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the mistake was not purely committed by the community, but the government as the policymaker and the authorities releasing information has become the cause of hoaxes in society because it does not provide definitive data.

Conclusion

Explanation of the findings and discussion data above shows that Indonesia's government, in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, did not prepare good integrated communication between the central government and regional governments. In comparison, the data provided by the central and regional governments becomes a reference by the public through social media, while online media channels the data provided by the government to be distributed to the broader public. The destructive impact of the many sources issued by the government with different primary data produces unclear data in the public's eyes. This situation has resulted in the public searching for data from third parties outside the government to have definite data. The government's absence of specific government information gives room to third parties to freely provide information freely and successfully convince the public that the third source is definite. The government's implications of poor media website data communication have resulted in an increasingly high hoax during the COVID-19 pandemic.

During a COVID-19 pandemic, the increasing number of hoaxes has added a burden on the central government to calm fear. Thus, Indonesia's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic is not proceeding smoothly. The overall findings and discussion provide an in depth analysis of the MRT that should prevent this problem. Governments must play an important role in providing reliable information in times of emergency. The number of sources available to the public must be taken seriously by the government. Individuals can focus their attention on a single information source, namely the State or regional government. In an uncertain situation, the public is not able to spread false news, which is favourable to the government, and decreases the level of anxiety. in the future.

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