

Mitigation of Covid-19 in The Framework of Communication Science

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Abstract— The covid-19 pandemic has struck the world and engulfed many victims of all nations in the world including Indonesia. The end of this condition is unpredictable. It demands human beings to struggle for survival and to free themselves from covid-19 restrains. Some efforts can be made to prevent covid-19 transmission through scientific approaches. One of the approaches is the communication theory paradigm. The perspective of critical theory supports this research to reveal every ‘justification’ and ‘the status quo’ condition which possibly will sacrifice the people (commoners) or the general public. This research uses a descriptive qualitative method. As the result, people need the appropriate covid-19 mitigation as their guideline to lead them to overcome this deadly virus. They have to be educated and reminded to obey the protocol and keep up their optimism on the immunity to defend themselves in facing the covid-19 pandemic.

Keywords—Covid-19 mitigation, preventive effort, communication theory paradigm

I. INTRODUCTION

When the covid-19 pandemic will be gone? This question may trigger human awareness continued thinking and taking actions to find out the solution for the pandemic virus called corona-19. Many countries in this hemisphere are determined to overcome this pandemic. As the covid-19 patient 01 and 02 were confirmed in Indonesia, there have been strategic steps done to prevail over this pandemic. Nationally, the government has formed a covid-19 task force that works massively and technically in various regions of Indonesia. The technical efforts in overcoming the Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia are necessary to be supported by various thoughts from various perspectives to become comprehensive, effective, and solvable.

This study intends to give a contribution in terms of thoughts from the communication science perspective on the strategic steps in overcoming the covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia. The communication theory paradigm approach seeks to provide solvable steps in a joint effort to prevent the spread of covid-19. This is for the reason that from time to time the virus has escalated and continued to increase for a period of the year since its emergence at the end of 2019. This paradigm encourages the efforts of preventing and overcoming the covid-19 pandemic through mitigation movement. Mitigation is an effort to reduce disaster risk, either through practical technical steps or through efforts to raise awareness and increase the ability to face disaster threats (Law No.24 of 2007 regarding Disaster Management) [1].

People all around the world hope that the covid-19 pandemic is ended in such an intermediate future. Covid-19 with its diverse variants has made people live in a restless world. People are anxious and even panic, they are afraid of infected by the virus and becoming victims which at the same time they are afraid of losing their jobs, having difficulties accessing sources of income for those who work odd jobs. Many economic businesses have to be closed or collapsed. Covid-19 not only attacks human health but also disrupts the joints of social and economic life for citizens. This condition appends the anxiety and panic of the residents.

The anxiety or panic should have been minimized when the discipline of health protocol rules is obeyed by all members of the community. The offensive of information about the covid-19 pandemic from various media, especially social media, also affects the level of citizen anxiety. The media revolution and communication technology ought to facilitate people with the ability to face this pandemic calmly, instead of panic or *grasa-grusu* (rush) for BLT (*Bantuan Langsung Tunai* in various regions as the effect of miscommunication between residents and their leaders in which there are invalid data on the poor and mismanagement of assistance for residents at the village level.

The media revolution and communication technology have emerged the culture of communication during and post covid-19 pandemic period. Communication culture deals with patterns and values emerging as a result of interactions between humans. Human interaction in this pandemic situation shows the culture of communication which in the future becomes a new cultural pattern after covid-19.

The covid-19 pandemic situation has a psychological effect as the panic and fear which would also affect the communication patterns both intrapersonal and interpersonal communications. In intrapersonal communication, there is a feeling of uncertainty and discomfort in this pandemic situation. Especially if someone has been declared as a patient under surveillance or is indicated to be reactive when a rapid test is carried out and/or has tested positive for covid-19. Many reactions show someone’s discomfort, such as crying hysterically, grieving, feeling inferior. This condition is worsened when they know or feel that they (the patient is under surveillance) and the patient’s family are bullied on social media after confirmed as positive for covid-19. This situation may lead to depression or stress that influences their resistance to viruses and decreasing their immunity.

II. METHOD

This research is originated from the critical theory paradigm. The perspective of critical theory supports this research to reveal every 'justification' and 'the status quo' condition which possibly will sacrifice the people (commoners) or the general public. The advocates of the critical theory believe that society is oppressed by the authorities, capital owners, and in sequence, every resource including the mass media can be used as a tool to oppress the people (commoners) or the public [2] This research uses a descriptive qualitative method through observation and analysis on the reality of the covid-19 pandemic happening in Indonesia through coverage of mainstream mass media and social media.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. *Uncertainty Reduction Theory*

Habermas in Maryani (2012) emphasizes that the reality where the dominant ideology is spread to the public and forms what is called as 'false consciousness. To overcome this situation requires critical awareness [3]. This is because many uncertainties can be found in any situation, moreover, problems or disasters.

There are full of uncertainties in this pandemic situation. Indeterminate economic conditions due to social restrictions after positive covid-19 cause uncertainty. Uncertainty also occurs when the government announces the increase of covid-19 patient from which no one ever knows the future situation. To reduce uncertainty in this post-positive covid-19 period, it is necessary to build a health communication pattern that encourages the attainment of a completely healthy state or status, physically, mentally, and socially.

Health communication has a strong relationship with human's effort to keep their health mainly in a pandemic situation. Health protocol operated by The Covid-19 Prevalence Acceleration Task Force Team (*Tim Gugus Tugas Percepatan Penanggulangan Covid-19*) from the central government to the regions becomes the main mechanism to overcome uncertainty situation because of this pandemic. This health protocol demands such attitude and behavior from the public to be loyal and consistently applying it where ever he is and with whom he interacts in the surrounding society.

The Uncertainty Reduction Theory can be used as a scientific foundation in controlling efforts made by the government which is noted as using various sources including a great amount of funding to overcome covid-19. Enoch Tanjong (2009) in his research suggested that the government's governance must be controlled in various ways through mass media so that the public can control it as well [4]. Public interaction through mass media, social media along with the development of communication technology should facilitate health services by providing accurate information. However, there are many problems and uncertainties faced by people because of inaccurate news, moreover, bullying in various social media account. Society becomes more frightened and the situation becomes uncertain. Hadad (2009) said that every information provided by mass media should have such accountability that becomes the mass media basis for the public's trust [5].

From the communication science perspective, in this covid-19 pandemic, the government, task force teams, and volunteers need to apply mitigation communication strategy of covid-19 through such collaboration with various mass media both electronic and non-electronic to produce professional news and information. Covid-19 should not be viewed as a scary and dramatic monster that people no need to be worried about as it can reduce their immune system and make them easily infected by the virus.

Covid-19 may not have vanished but the pattern of human communication on diverse viruses including corona needs to be developed as a constant habit. This habit includes a healthy lifestyle, maintaining personal hygiene and environment clean, always washing hands (handwashing places and soap are provided) have to become a habit in every house and public service places such as offices, markets, supermarkets, clinics, hospitals, terminals. In addition, covid-19 mitigation is necessarily delivered by literal or plain language which can be understood by each level of society and by keeping the space. Related to keeping the space, from a communication science perspective, it is called proxemics theory or body position or body space of someone against others.

B. *Proxemics Theory: "Keep a Space" in Communication*

Communication science also develops a study of using room and space in communication known as "Proxemics". Edward T. Hall classified it into four (4) forms of "keeping a space" in communication namely: intimate space (15 to 46 cm), private space (46 cm to 1 meter), social space (1 m to 3 m), public space (more than 3 meters). Proxemics space shows there is maintaining space and room for interaction among people. Generally, using space shows the closeness level of the relationship between two persons. From the communication science perspective, using space is influenced by cultural context and the belief of social norms. Proxemics space in the perspective of communication science above can be applied when the world is tackled by this covid-19 pandemic. The government has issued policies related to keeping distance, namely social distancing, and physical distancing. Social distancing is an effort to reduce and stop the chain of the spread of the coronavirus by keeping a distance of 2 meters from other people and avoid crowds to prevent disease transmission. This is important to be done in slowing down the contagious disease transmission as covid-19. The steps to take are: minimizing physical contact, no shaking hands, reducing outside activities by working, studying, and praying from home during the interim in the pandemic.

On Friday (20th March 2020), World Health Organization (WHO) changed the term of Social Distancing with Physical Distancing. The reason was an instruction or affirmation to stay at home to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. However, this affirmation did not mean that people have to stop the relationship or communication with other/s. The point of WHO's affirmation is that during the covid-19 pandemic, people should use space, namely social distance from the perspective of communication science, that can avoid the contagious coronavirus and break the chain of covid-19 spread.

C. Mass Communication Theory

From the communication theory paradigm, whether it is health communication or mass communication, public anxiety needs to be minimized through discussion and communication having accountability. Such news is accountable when it does not trigger anxiety from the side of its reader. That news should be taken from reality or fact even though it has already been reconstructed, but it should be noticed that the news does not contain hoax or malicious deception which will lead to social panic.

Simarmata explains that mass media is demanded to employ a language effectively in social association and forming social realities. Hence, news manifested by language must be comprehensible for its society or its speakers. By using language, the reality being constructed could be spread over the symbolic representation process [6]. Maryani (2012) explains that the reality itself is the result of subjective construction (transactional, subjectivist, and created findings). McQuail (2002) scrutinized the media accountability principle concerning media obligation to provide answers to the public or everyone about every information they spread according to the criteria and rules of mass media attribution [7]. Meanwhile, Abror (2009) asserts that mass media is the mirror of events or phenomena in public or around the globe, providing us with a valuable or truthful reflection. It is in line with Hill who states that mass media engages a significant effect on the spread and information acceleration [8]. Moreover, McPherson (2012) also asserts that mass media has a crucial role in building democracy [9]. Dosi states that there is an ideology prelude to the production of news by mass media. Thus, it is crucial to find out authority power relations on the published news. In the historical context, a printed mass media in East Nusa Tenggara Province represented the whole power inside and outside of the media environment [10].

Ignas Kleden argues that generally, a journalist or media workers always deal with news, in which any information about every existing or happening event in the society [11]. Concerning that duty, the frequency, accuracy, and also actuality of the news are at risk. The mass media which is always not up to date in reporting news or only provides less news will be abandoned by its readers, listeners, and its viewers. The question is does journalism involves just facts, the information about an event, or also the meaning behind those events? The fact then speaks more to the public if a critical and interesting question is up fronted to those facts. A statement does not just appear easily The world is now suffering from the covid-19 pandemic, but the hopes to be freed from this deadly virus should always be our priority. People need the appropriate covid-19 mitigation as their guideline to lead them to overcome this deadly virus. The citizens have to be educated and reminded to obey the health protocol and keep up their optimism on their immunity to defend themselves in facing the covid-19 pandemic. A citizen's optimism could increase body immunity, but in certain circumstances, it's not that easy. The citizens' optimism should be supported by the because many facts are compiled and reported, but beyond that those facts are well organized to become a medium for a message and a meaning. The citizens facing the covid-19 pandemic need

accurate information from the media and practical efforts that have to be done in facing this pandemic. Therefore, health and mass communication managed by various kinds of media are required to elevate social solidarity in facing and fight together against the coronavirus.

D. Covid-19 in Indonesia

Based on the Indonesia's Komite Penanganan Covid-19 dan Pemulihan Ekonomi Nasional. website, accessed on June 8th 2021, the government facing about 1,877,050 confirmed case. About 101,635 active case (5.4%), 1,723,753 recovery (91.8%), and 52,162 death case (2.8%), with total examination about 11,773,437, and specimen 17,509,373. Province with the most case is DKI Jakarta about 438,863 confirmed, and the lowest is Maluku Utara about 4,576 confirmed. Province of Nusa Tenggara Timur is facing 16,981 confirmed case [12].

IV. CONCLUSION

Paradigm of thinking as presented in this article specifically the framework of the communication science perspective which states about healthy lifestyle, physical and social distancing during interaction process with others. The paradigm of communication theories above is expected to be basic principles of or foundations for thoughts which later in practical-action-technical handled by stakeholders in an attempt to solve and prevent the escalation of victims and moral and material loss because of the covid-19 pandemic which end is still difficult to predict.

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