

# Communication Media Preferences of Palu City Community for Covid-19 Related-Information

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine the preferences of the communication media used by the people of Palu City, especially in the South Palu District in meeting the needs for acquiring Covid-19 Information. The survey method was chosen by using and distributing questionnaires to 100 respondents using accidental sampling method of 71,650 citizens, in the area. The theory used is The Uses and Gratification. Results show that about 63% people use social media more than other types of communication media, followed by television 15%, then printed media and instant messaging applications which are 7% respectively. The high number of respondents choosing social media because most of them (55%) thought that it is easy to access. Moreover, most of respondents are in the age range of 18 to 25 years, where social media is popular in the age range than others. Consequently, the information they acquire is sometimes misleading. Another fact shown on the questionnaire is that about 43% respondents do not believe the information about covid-19 they get from the communication media. The entry of the Covid 19 virus in Indonesia between February-March 2020 caused people to be anxious and confused about how to deal with the situation. So that 25% of the total respondents try to find information to prevent transmission from happening to them. This is in contrast to the number of Covid-19 survivors, which is 59.9% scattered in the area, which should encourage local residents to be more intense in seeking information. After more and more cases were recorded in the area, it was in further action with more curiosity to seek further information with a value of 30.9%. People often seek information, especially regarding the prevention of Covid 19 as much as 25%. The high duration of access to information between 3-4 hours per day (40.1%) does not reflect the level of anxiety of respondents (27.6%) who feel less worried and consider the Health Protocol not too important (45.4%). This is expected to be a consideration for policymakers in formulating communication activities in the form of campaigns related to Covid 19.

**Keywords:** Preference, Communication Media, Information Needs, Covid-19

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The world is still struggling through the crisis due to the Covid-19 virus, so the IMF and the World Bank have predicted a global economic recession will occur. The Indonesian Bank and the Indonesian Minister of Finance share the view that Indonesia's economic future is also bleak, at least until early 2021, economic growth will be depressed to minus -6.13% in August 2020 (Sri Mulyani, 2020). To date, based on data on the distribution of Covid-19 cases in Indonesia, it has reached 4,243,835 (positive), 4,088,138 (recovered) and 143,388 (died) according to data dated October 30, 2021 (covid19.go.id) (2). Various efforts have been made by the Government of Indonesia through the Covid-19 Task

Force Team (Team Task Force) in suppressing the rate of numbers and the spread of Covid-19. However, it is considered not optimal with the increasing number of positivity rates (PR) in a number of areas which are still relatively high when compared to the World Health Organization (WHO) standard of 5%. Even specifically for the Central Java and East Java regions, the PR figure is at 15-30%. (Kompas.com).

Not only is the Positive Rate number still relatively high, the number of Covid-19 red zones spread throughout Indonesia is still high. Quoted from regional.kontan.co.id stated that the most Covid 19 red zones were still in Central Java, which reached 18 regions, where the previous week it reached 21 regions.

The second and third largest red zone donations came from East Java and Central Sulawesi. The details of the Regencies/Cities that are included in the red zone in Central Sulawesi Province are: Poso, Donggala, Tolitoli, Parigi Moutong, Sigi, North Morowali and Palu City (Wikanto, 2021).

The problems mentioned above occur due to several factors. Spokesman for the Covid-19 Task Force, Wiku Adisasmito, said that there were three causes of the high number of cases of death due to Covid-19, namely (1) cases handled too late, (2) having comorbid diseases that reduce the chance of recovery, and (3) there is a possibility that less than optimal health services (Kompas.com). In addition, the level of discipline of citizens in implementing health protocols is still very minimal and cultural factors are gathering habits and the emergence of diverse perceptions in the community regarding Covid-19 information.

The rise of the information related to the pandemic containing fake news has also exacerbated the pandemic situation. The habit of sharing information and not understanding the impact of that information can have fatal consequences and cause casualties. Such as incorrect information about one of the antidotes to COVID-19 which makes people feel safe with the drug, thus ignoring the health protocol recommendations (indonesiabaik.id).

According to a survey conducted by the Center for Research and Development of Applications and Information for Public Communication, Kominfo in 2017 as many as 39.58% of Indonesians use smartphones to communicate. There are at least 55% of Indonesian people who only see the title of the information without reading the information in its entirety, while out of all respondents there are 72% who tend to forward information that is considered important without checking the information (Daily Social, 2018).

People are confused about this outbreak due to the flood of information. They need accurate information to prevent the transmission of Covid-19 and filter information (Poel et al., 2021; Balarabe, 2020) The need for this information is one of the things that affect the preferences of the communication media used to meet these needs.

## **2. RESEARCH METHOD**

This study uses quantitative methods and a survey approach using the Slovin formula from the total population of South Palu Regency. The survey method was conducted by using and distributing questionnaires to 100 respondents selected by accidental sampling method of 71,650 citizens, in the area. Accidental sampling method is used as part of sampling with the probability of objects and subjects integrated with the percentage of probability and availability of objects and subjects. In order to get the general description of the characteristics of the population (Asep Saepul & Bahrudin, 2014).

The questionnaires are adopted from The Uses and Gratification theory. Researchers use the uses and gratifications approach to explain the selection and the use of any communication media available in the Palu city.

## **3. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **3.1 The Uses and Gratifications Theory**

The uses and gratifications theory approach is more focused on uses media content to get satisfaction (gratification) of one's needs, which In this theory, an active audience, intentionally uses the media to satisfy his needs. "The uses and gratifications approach questions what people do to media, namely using the media to satisfy their needs (Foss & Littlejohn, 2009). Unlike other mass communication theories that focus on media consumption, the uses and gratifications approach give people the power to decide which media to choose or consume. The community has an active role in interpret and integrate media into their lives. In uses and gratifications, the community is responsible for the selection of media to meet their needs.

## **4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

Based on a survey conducted on 100 people, 70% of the respondents were female (70 people) and 30% male (30 people) with a percentage of 62% (62 people) in the age range of 18-25 years. South Palu Subdistrict as the area with the highest number of residents exposed to Covid-19 (as of January 24, 2021, Palu City Health Office) showed that residents exposed to Covid-19 in the region reached 59.9% (approximately 59 people). This high number does not make local residents care and alert, because only 24.3% (approximately 24 people) have the desire to know and add information related to Covid-19. This figure is quite low, even though more than half of the respondents are Covid-19 survivors.

Information circulating both through conventional mass media and social media is very diverse. This makes it difficult for the public to access reliable information, even though there are communication media that are guaranteed to provide valid information, such as the government's official website and social media through the Covid 19 Task Force.

Referring to the survey results, the variety of information accessed by the second largest respondent is how to prevent Covid19 (as much as 25%) and the highest is access to other information as much as 34.6%.

Summarized by Kompas Tekno from We Are Social, Tuesday (23/2/2021) (8), the time spent by Indonesians to access the internet per day is on average 8 hours 52 minutes. Based on the most used applications, sequentially the first position is YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, then Twitter (Kompas.com). This is in line with the results of a survey conducted on 100

respondents who stated that 40.1% often access information for 3 to 4 hours per day.

The results of data processing on the level of public concern during the pandemic, showed a value of 27.6% (less worried). Meanwhile, on the question of how important it is to carry out and comply with the Health protocol through 3M or 5M which has been informed by the government as part of measures to prevent the spread of Covid-19 in the community, the highest figure is 45.4% with the definition of information related to the Health Protocol being not important for the community. Other data related to how often people understand and carry out government appeals related to preventing Covid-19 are at a value of 27.6% (quite often) carrying out the appeals delivered by the government.

Every human being has different information needs, to fulfill it also has their own way. Sulisty & Basuki (2004) explains that information needs are information that a person wants for work, research, spiritual satisfaction, education, and others. That is, when someone is in a situation where they have to make decisions, answer questions, or solve problems. In other words, a person can be said to need information when he realizes that his knowledge is still insufficient to solve a certain problem in his life.

Every human being has different information needs. This is due to differences in educational background, age, gender, occupation/profession and also the goals of each individual. In addition, each person also has different traits, attitudes, habits, abilities, intelligence, and interests. This is what makes a person motivated to seek and use information in order to meet their information needs.

Human information needs arise because of the knowledge gap that a person has, where a condition of the need to fill the void or lack of knowledge that exists in humans in dealing with certain situations to be able to make decisions and reduce a sense of uncertainty in humans, thus raising questions and pushed himself to seek answers to what he wanted. Human information needs are endless because when one of their needs has been met, new information needs will emerge. So from these needs, humans can take advantage of the collections in the library to meet their information needs

The role of communication media is very important in publishing information about an area. Media as a means of channelling messages and ideas as well as their function of informing and educating, is also able to influence audiences in decision making (Sukrillah et al., 2017) (10). This is because the media is able to expand interaction and reach a wide audience. In addition to being a channel of distribution, the media also has a complex social function. The selection of the right media will determine the success of program promotion to the public (Hasanah et al., 2016) (11).

Based on the survey results, the reason for choosing social media is that it is easily accessible/reachable by

everyone (55.3%). This is in line with the 63% gain for social media as a communication medium that is widely accessed. Television is in second place with 15% and followed by instant messaging applications and newspapers/magazines with 7% each.

As a result of the high percentage who choose social media as a medium for finding information related to Covid-19, this results in a low level of public trust regarding the information obtained. This is evidenced by 42.8% of respondents who feel they lack confidence in the news of Covid19. Information on social media is considered not to be accounted for as a journalistic product. Although official government accounts on several social media can be easily accessed, the number of less credible accounts obscures the actual information.

The use and selection of social media as a communication medium in accessing information to meet these needs, about 23% of respondents who have been surveyed agree with this statement. However, this is considered contradictory if it is associated with Covid19, that 36.8% of respondents considered social media as the most chosen (63%) considered not able to fulfill the integrity of information related to Covid 19. According to Nasrullah (2016) (12) social media has a more interactive nature than radio or television. Some of the advantages of social media include: (1) Simplicity, making it easy to use, even without an information technology (IT) background; (2) Building Relationships, through interaction with customers (users); (3) Global Reach, where information is spread in an instant, geographic location is no longer a barrier; and (4) Measurable, with an easy search system, messages sent can be measured in a short time (Nasrullah, 2016).

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