



A Critical Review of the RT-PCR Test Policy and Antigen Swab in Indonesia

Feri Sanjaya^(✉)

STIAMI Institute, Jakarta, Indonesia
feri.sanjaya303@gmail.com

Abstract. During the Covid-19 pandemic, Indonesia implemented the obligation to attach a negative Covid-19 certificate for the RT-PCR test and Antigen Swab as a condition for traveling for transportation modes. This policy has attracted many protests because it burdens the community because the government is considered not to regulate the Highest Retail Price (HET). This research uses a descriptive method with a critical perspective with data findings and the fact that the prices of RT-PCR and Antigen Swab tests vary so that it raises suspicions of a business game from test service providers that is detrimental to consumers.

Keywords: Antigen Swab RT-PCR Test · Covid-19 · Critical Perspective

1 Introduction

The obligation to attach a negative Covid-19 certificate with an RT-PCR test and an Antigen Swab as a condition of travel for transportation modes is considered a policy that harms consumers. The existence of various prices for RT-PCR and Antigen Swab tests such as the term “PCR Express” is considered a trick from test service providers to reap business profits.

The government, through the Covid-19 Task Force, issued a policy for handling Covid-19 and the National Economic Recovery, which was deemed to have allowed the highest retail price to play. The price game mode for RT-PCR and Antigen Swab tests is done by outsmarting the varying rates, according to the type of service such as the type of 24-h PCR Swab service with fast results, ranging from 60 min to 1 × 24 h or Same Day PCR with longer results.

Tulus Abadi from YLKI highlighted the obligation to attach a negative certificate for the Covid-19 PCR test as a discriminatory policy because it is only in the air and train transportation sector while others only use antigens, even transportation that does not use any conditions [1].

Epidemiologist Tri Yunis Miko Wahyono from the University of Indonesia highlights the RT-PCR test policy charged to passengers at a price that is still expensive [2].

The Chairperson of the Indonesian House of Representatives, Puan Maharani, assessed that the new policy regarding the PCR test made the public even more confused, considering that at a time when the handling of Covid-19 was getting better, the conditions for traveling were even more stringent [3].

Former Secretary of the Ministry of SOEs, Muhammad Said Didu, assessed that PCR was included in the category of public needs, so the government should be present in meeting the needs of the PCR. If left unchecked, it will lead to a business game that takes advantage of state policies towards its people [4].

The general chairman of the Angkasa Pura II (Sekarpura II) Employee Union, Trisna Wijaya, complained about the imbalance in the application of travel requirements between modes of transportation, especially regarding the mandatory PCR test. Airplane passengers who feel it is unfair to have to show a negative PCR test result for Covid-19. Meanwhile, other transportation users, such as users of private cars, motor-bikes, buses, trains and ships are allowed to use negative results from the antigen swab test [5].

Secretary General of the Indonesian Hotel and Restaurant Association (PHRI), Maulana Yusran, highlighted the mandatory requirement for a PCR swab test for a permit to board a plane which was considered too expensive. The price of the PCR swab test is assessed still too high for the general public. On the other hand, it has become a wetland for clinics and hospitals as providers. "There shouldn't be a PCR test anymore that (the result is) 24-10-6 h, all the results are under 6 h. Then the price of PCR must also be in the range of Rp. 100 thousand to Rp. 200 thousand. Considering that if we look at the volume of the PCR test, it is also quite high" [6].

The purpose of this research is to criticize the RT-PCR test policy and the Antigen Swab as a condition of travel for transportation modes in Indonesia from a critical perspective of the community in the hope that it can be used as an evaluation material for the government to make policies that prioritize the interests of the people, not attaching importance to the business of entrepreneurs.

2 Method

This research uses a qualitative method with a critical perspective. To obtain data for research data carried out through a qualitative approach to research informants [7].

The critical perspective believes that the reality that occurs is the result of the system that has been constructed. In addition, events or phenomena that occur have been controlled by the parties or groups in power [8].

Critical view is defined as an alternative paradigm related to society whose purpose is to criticize and justify the status quo that exists in society and provide alternative knowledge to be able to produce a better social order [9].

So that the critical perspective in this research is used to criticize the policy on the obligation to attach a negative Covid-19 certificate for the RT-PCR test and Antigen Swab as a condition of travel for transportation modes.

The critical perspective can be seen from the linguistic side. Language here is understood in text, context, and discourse. Text is all forms of language, not only words but also all kinds of communication expressions. Context includes all situations and things that are outside the text and affect the use of language. Discourse here is interpreted as text and context together [10].

3 Results and Discussion

Wana Alamsyah from Indonesia Corruption Watch criticized the government's policy of reducing the price of PCR tests which did not reflect the principles of transparency and accountability. The provisions regarding the price of PCR examinations have changed at least several times [11]. The price of the RT-PCR test and the Covid-19 antigen swab in Indonesia has been recorded four times change. It has reached Rp 2.5 million since the beginning of the March 2020 pandemic, reduced to Rp 900 thousand for PCR and Rp 250–349 thousand for antigen swab on October 2, 2020, then on August 16, 2021 the price of RT-PCR tests and Covid-19 antigen swabs again reduced to Rp 450–550 thousand and Rp 125–190 thousand. After receiving sharp criticism, in October 2021 the government set a new price of Rp. 300 thousand for RT-PCR tests and antigen swabs of Rp 99–109 thousand. The decision was made because the public compared the prices of the RT-PCR test and antigen swab in India, which only ranged from Rp. 96 to 106 thousand.

The highest tariff limit applies to people who carry out RT-PCR examinations at their own request or independently. This highest rate applies to people who carry out rapid antigen-swab tests at their own request which are carried out in health service facilities such as hospitals and laboratories. However, this highest rate does not apply to health care facilities that receive equipment assistance from the government.

Not Transparent

Wana Alamsyah regretted that other price components were also not disclosed in a transparent manner, so that the price decline did not have a clear basis. This is because the Financial and Development Supervisory Agency (BPKP) and the Ministry of Health have never submitted any information regarding the types of test components and the amount of the price [12].

Existing calculations state that there are at least Rp23 trillion in costs for the procurement of Covid-19 test kits issued by the government from October 2020 to August 2021. The calculation is based on the calculation of the number of specimens examined by the lab multiplied by the highest examiner rate. This price difference becomes an advantage for the health facility or laboratory that examines PCR.

ICW hopes that the government can stop all efforts to accommodate certain business interests through PCR tests. ICW also urges the government to make the PCR test free because it adds to the burden on the community [12].

Conflict of Interest

YLBHI through its chairman Asfinawati highlighted the government's role which is full of interest in the policy of RT-PCR testing and antigen swab as a condition for traveling long-distance transportation modes. The existence of two officials, namely Luhut Binsar Panjaitan and Erick Thohir's family as shareholders in PT Genomik Solidaritas Indonesia, a company that provides Covid-19 test services, shows a conflict of interest that violates the law in administering the test government free of corruption, collusion and nepotism [13].

Precise but Burdensome

Yoesep Budianto from LaporCovid-19 assessed that there are two points of view to address this policy, namely medical and economic. From a medical point of view, this policy is the right decision to conduct a more accurate screening. Meanwhile, from an economic perspective, it will burden residents whose income has been reduced due to the pandemic. For example, for a train trip, which usually only costs 300–400 thousand rupiah, the test fee must be added. Especially if the trip is accompanied by family. “It is questionable whether all modes of transportation need to require a PCR test” [14].

Argue

The government, through its spokesperson, responded to criticism of the RT-PCR test policy and the Antigen Swab as a condition of travel mode. Coordinating Minister for Maritime Affairs and Investment Luhut Binsar Pandjaitan denied making the Covid-19 PCR test policy a condition for boarding a plane for no reason. This rule is implemented because the mobility of citizens has recently begun to increase. It is feared that the high mobility of the community will make Covid-19 cases soar again, so the government requires passengers to test PCR planes [15].

The Government Spokesperson for Covid-19, doctor Reisa Kartikasari Broto Asmoro explained, the mandatory PCR requirements were applied to anticipate the transmission of Covid-19. In addition, there have been many regulations and increased vigilance regarding existing health protocols [16].

The Director General of Health Services at the Ministry of Health, Abdul Kadir said that the evaluation of PCR prices was carried out together with BPKP through calculating the cost of taking and examining RT-PCR, consisting of components in the form of service/HR services, reagent components and consumables (BHP), cost components administration, overhead and other components adapted to current conditions [17].

4 Conclusion

The public’s critical opinion regarding the obligation to attach a negative Covid-19 certificate with the RT-PCR test and Antigen Swab as a condition of transportation mode travel is a reaction to the high price of tests in Indonesia. The reaction when viewed from a critical perspective can be seen from the linguistic side. Language here is understood in text, context, and discourse. Text is all forms of language, not only words but also all kinds of communication expressions. Existing critical texts such as the word tricked, discriminatory, ineffective in preventing the transmission of Covid-19, irrational, only adds to the burden, people are increasingly confused, business games, imbalance, not transparent and accountable. While the context was raised with an atmosphere of anxiety, panic, and confusion with the situation that occurred during the implementation of the policy of attaching the negative Covid-19 certificate. Meanwhile, discourse here is interpreted as using text and context together to show a reaction against the implementation of the policy and to ask the government to provide free tests.

To answer these criticisms, there is a need for transparency of information from the government regarding the RT-PCR test policy and the Antigen Swab so that the public can accept the government’s policy as long as it is transparent. This transparency needs

to be carried out so that the public understands why PCR tests are expensive, and can account for the management of funds for the Covid-19 response for the past two years.

Acknowledgments. The author would like to express gratitude to Allah SWT, the Almighty God for His will to be able to complete this article.

For that the author would like to thank:

1. The Chancellor of the Muhammadiyah University of North Sumatra (UMSU) Who Has Provided the Opportunity to Participate in Incclusi.
2. The Dean of FISIP UMSU, Head of the Study Program, and Immediately Academics Who Have Contributed.
3. Prof. Engkus Kuswarno, MS, Dissertation Promoter of Padjadjaran Iniversity who provided input and suggestions for this article.
4. All Parties Who Have Made Their Contributions That Can't Be Mentioned One By One.

Authors' Contributions. The author's contribution in this article is an input to the Indonesian government so as not to make policies that are criticized by the public such as the RtPcr Test Policy and Antigen Swab as a Travel Condition. Even though the government has scientifically shown data on the transmission of COVID-19, it must continue to prioritize transparency so that the public can receive it, especially the management of COVID-19 relief funds.

References

1. [www.kompas.com](https://www.kompas.com/weeken/read/2021/10/24/151408281/yilki-price-test-pcr-in-the-manyrickedfield?page=all). (24 October 2021). <https://www.kompas.com/weeken/read/2021/10/24/151408281/yilki-price-test-pcr-in-the-manyrickedfield?page=all>
2. [www.radioidola.com](https://www.radioidola.com/2021/epidemiologs-upport-aturan-tes-pcr-bagipenumpang-planebecausemore-accurate/). (22 October 2021). <https://www.radioidola.com/2021/epidemiologs-upport-aturan-tes-pcr-bagipenumpang-planebecausemore-accurate/>
3. [www.dpr.go.id](https://www.dpr.go.id/berita/detail/id/35386/t/Pemerintah+Harus+Answer+Confusion+Society+Question+PCR+Syarat+All+Flights). (21 October 2021). <https://www.dpr.go.id/berita/detail/id/35386/t/Pemerintah+Harus+Answer+Confusion+Society+Question+PCR+Syarat+All+Flights>
4. [www.finance.detik.com](https://finance.detik.com/berita-ekonomi-bisnis/d5788985/kritikan-Hard-lalupcrdiaturnegaradiharga-rakyat-dinikmati-swast). (30 October 2021). <https://finance.detik.com/berita-ekonomi-bisnis/d5788985/kritikan-Hard-lalupcrdiaturnegaradiharga-rakyat-dinikmati-swast>
5. [www.majalahbandara.com](https://www.majalahbandara.com/sekarpura-iikeluhkantes-pcr-jadi-saat-penerbangan/). (25 October 2021). <https://www.majalahbandara.com/sekarpura-iikeluhkantes-pcr-jadi-saat-penerbangan/>
6. [industri.kontan.co.id/](https://industri.kontan.co.id/berita/aturan-barunaikpesawat-dunia-pcr-test-ini-respons-phri). (19 October 2021). <https://industri.kontan.co.id/berita/aturan-barunaikpesawat-dunia-pcr-test-ini-respons-phri>
7. Eka Surya, D. (2018). Implementing communication for discovering company's background, its cooperation partners, and its communities as the SMEs businessmen. In *international conference on business, economic, social sciences and humanity, advances in social science, education and humanities research* (Vol. 225, pp 212–217). <https://doi.org/10.2991/icobest-18.2018.4>
8. Creswell, J. (1994). *Research design: qualitative and quantitative. Approaches*. SAGE Publications.
9. [feb.ugm.ac.id/](https://feb.ugm.ac.id/berita/3250-paradigmakritis-as-kritikus-status-quo-di-society). (31 May 2021). <https://feb.ugm.ac.id/berita/3250-paradigmakritis-as-kritikus-status-quo-di-society>
10. Suharyo, S. (2018). Critical paradigm in discourse research. *Nusa: Journal of Language and Literature*, 13(3), 482–492. <https://doi.org/10.14710/nusa.13.3.482-492>

11. <https://national.kompas.com>. (01 November 2021). <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2021/11/01/05310021/koalisi-kritik-penurunan-harga-tes-pcr-yang-tidak-transparan-dan-akuntabel?page=all>
12. <https://www.antikorupsi.org/id/>. (1 November 2021). <https://antikorupsi.org/id/article/bisnis-pcr-dan-konflik-kepentingan-pejabat-publik>
13. www.cnnindonesia.com. (02 November 2021). <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20211101185526-12-715196/dugaan-menteri-jokowi-dibisnispcr-bisa-picu-konflik-kepentingan>
14. <https://hakasasi.id/>. (27 October 2021). <https://hakasasi.id/2021/10/27/laporcovidsalah-harga-pcr-not-all-the-society-capable-because-mahal/>
15. <https://national.kompas.com/>. (25 October 2021). <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2021/10/25/17503041/wajib-pcr-jadi-syarat-naik-pesawat-ramai-dikritik-luhut-ini-untuk-imbangi?page=all>
16. <https://www.merdeka.com>. (25 October 2021). <https://www.merdeka.com/events/dokter-rei-sasaya-pcr-naik-pesawat-to-prevent-gelombang-ketiga-covid-19.html>
17. <https://sehatnegeriku.kemkes.go.id/>. (27 October 2021). <https://sehatnegeriku.kemkes.go.id/baca/rilis-media/20211027/4738755/tarif-rt-pcr-down-this-latest-price>

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits any noncommercial use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.

