



# Impact of Television Journalist's Work Productivity at Third Wave of Covid-19 Pandemic

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**Abstract.** The third wave of the Covid-19 pandemic has become a real threat to Indonesia. The real economic sector is no exception, it even hits the activity and works productivity of the television journalist profession in particular. The purpose of this study is to explain in detail the impact of journalists' work in carrying out their profession during the Covid-19 pandemic. The theory used in this study is the Uses And Gratification Theory introduced by Elihu Katz, Jay G. Blumler, and Michael Gurevitch. This type of research is qualitative research with data collection techniques through observation, interviews, and documentation. The results of this study indicate that the productivity and work activities of television journalists have a very significant influence. First, television journalists are the leading professionals that are very vulnerable to being exposed to the Covid-19 pandemic. Second, television journalists lack health facilities. Meanwhile, third, there is a change in the pattern of journalist coverage in the field.

**Keywords:** productivity · television journalists · Covid-19 pandemic

## 1 Introduction

The Corona Virus Disease or Covid pandemic has entered the third wave phase, it has changed the world's perspective in regulating life activities. This change in perspective shifts normal life patterns to become abnormal in almost every aspect of life. The Covid-19 pandemic has become a real threat to people's economic life in the last three years. The center of the real economy that boosted the people's economy was badly hit and even had real implications for massive layoffs of employees from many companies, both government and private.

When the government's decision on the status of Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB) was stipulated by the Governor of DKI Jakarta, Anies Baswedan, and confirmed by Decree of the Minister of Health of the Republic of Indonesia No. HK.01.07/Menkes/239/2020 regarding the determination of the DKI Jakarta PSBB area, the intensity of community activities continues to be limited [1]. The purpose of the PSBB was to accelerate the breaking of the chain of epidemics that at that time could not be

tamed (Daulay, 2020). The impact of restrictions on community activities indirectly limits the mobility of people in and out of the capital city in DKI Jakarta. Small communities are the first elements to feel the impact of the PSBB. The number of merchants is multiplied by five and the shop is temporarily closed. Daily workers, permanent employees, motorcycle taxi drivers, and other workers were laid off [2].

The communication sector, especially television broadcasting media, is a sector that is greatly affected by the implementation of the PSBB. The work pattern and productivity of television crews working in the field were forced to change their way of working. Each television media initially imposed different rules for its employees. Changes in television management change the pattern, at least in two patterns, namely first, changes in the working hours of journalists who work in the field. Previously, journalists worked in reporting without fixed working hours. After this change, television journalists prioritized their work from home.

The method used is through interviews with resource persons from home using technology in the form of zoom meetings or other internet applications. Second, the productivity of loading quality news decreases. Despite the reduced working hours, television journalists continue to work full-time from home. The perceived impact can be seen from the productivity of loading images and news of low quality. The pictures shown by journalists were still taking pictures long before the PSBB rules were enforced to adjust the production of existing news when it was about to be broadcast.

Loading the image in this aspect is freedom in the mass media after Indonesia was imprisoned for 32 years during the New Order era. The information conveyed is very open, ranging from political, economic, cultural aspects to legal issues. Media freedom is mainly broadcast to the public to exercise social control openly [3].

It is an unavoidable fact when journalists work in the field, they are very vulnerable to being exposed to the coronavirus. The journalism profession during the Covid-19 pandemic is a dilemma. On the one hand, the demands of the journalistic profession must cover the epidemic. Journalists are required to cover and broadcast moving images to complement the news data. On the other hand, pandemic conditions pose a threat for journalists to be exposed to virus transmission. Data from the Press Emblem Campaign (PEC) based in Geneva (2020), revealed that from March to September 2020, 600 journalists died due to Covid-19 worldwide. This figure continues to increase until October 2020 to 1,208 journalists. In Brazil, the journalist death rate was 183, followed by Peru with 142, India with 121, and Mexico with 106 journalists [4].

According to PEC data (2020), in the three months from October to December 2020, the number of journalist deaths in India was the largest, which claimed the lives of 50 journalists. PEC Secretary-General Blaise Lempen said the death of journalists from the coronavirus was listed as the most vulnerable, reaching 673 people. Moving to the Asian continent which is spread over 20 countries, the death of journalists reached 254 people, while in Europe 175 people, in Africa 15 people. This data is data that has been submitted to PEC, but there are many more journalists who have died and have not been announced to the public [4].

According to the records of the Alliance of Independent Journalists (AJI) in March-September 2020, at least 242 journalists were exposed to Covid-19. However, solid data

were not obtained, from that number how many journalists died and how many people made a full recovery and returned to work as usual [5].

Changes in work carried out by television management have an impact on the productivity of the journalist profession. Journalists in carrying out their profession apply health protocols. The importance of maintaining social distancing and strict health protocols have put people in abnormal conditions. This condition also has an impact on the quality of work of journalists, including the work of television journalists who have been working full-time in the field on a limited basis. In fact, in carrying out their duties, journalists have high mobility, often interact with many people, and collect data from many sources, both physical and non-physical. However, after Covid-19 faced the work of journalists, it demanded a change in the pattern of coverage that occurred in television journalists. Not only that, but the intensity of news production has also changed.

The use of the internet is increasingly unavoidable during the Covid-19 pandemic. The Internet seems to be a small global city and can be accessed by anyone. The Internet can be seen as a very large electronic city, where every resident has an address called an internet address that is used to exchange information. The internet is a repository of unlimited information that can be accessed by anyone [6].

While working on field coverage, television journalists encounter many unavoidable obstacles. Like the difficulty of avoiding physical distancing when covering [7]. Keeping distance is mandatory when interviewing sources, but many television journalists ignore the fact that distance is ignored. In addition, it is difficult to meet the resource persons. The source seemed to consider the enemies of the journalists who wanted to interview him for fear of meeting other people and the possibility of contracting the coronavirus [7].

Based on the background of the problem, the formulation of the research problem is to see how the productivity of the television journalist profession during the Covid-19 pandemic is. Then, this study looks at the productivity and work constraints of journalists during the Covid-19 pandemic. This study aims to explain in detail the work productivity of the television journalist profession during the Covid-19 pandemic. Then further explained in detail what obstacles are faced by television journalists in their productivity and work during the Covid-19 pandemic.

## 2 Literature Review

Advances in information technology in new media have given rise to an information society, and require us to redefine the theory of media that has existed so far. Ward (2017) says that the existing theory sees the media only on the existence and influence of the media, while the informatization process itself has not been touched much. With various types of new media that can be used as sources of information, from the very massive to the personal ones, it involves an informatization process that is relatively different from the audience's assessment [8].

The theory of new media or new media is closely related to the rapid advancement of technology. In recent years, technology has brought significant changes in every aspect of human life. New media presents new exploration spaces that are wider, limitless, and have fast dimensions. New media is also a tool to facilitate information from one

party to the community. The development of new media gives color to the study of mass communication [9, p. 87]. The presence of new media can increase social interaction between people. From what was previously limited to geographical boundaries, now it is wide open and becomes a new space that can interact with fellow humans [9].

In its application, new media has several characteristics [9]. Among them 1). Digital. Information in the form of data is processed into numbers that can be read by machines. If analog or conventional processes still use physical processes, digital processes allow information to move quickly. Not only that, but digital is also able to accommodate a very large amount of information. This data transformation makes the digital concept has the advantage of fast and diverse access to information. 2) Interactivity. Conventional media have limitations in opening interactive spaces. Even if you could, it would take longer. Unlike the case with new media, which makes interaction wide open. With a digital base, data access and exchange are fast. This includes accommodating interactions. New media bring changes in communication patterns. 3). Hypertextual. This characteristic refers to the ease of availability of information in new media. Among others, in the form of easy access to information anywhere and anytime. There is a lot of information in the new media, but the user can choose which information is needed. 4). Network. Information in the new media is connected. Information contained in digital devices can be accessed by anyone at the same time. 5). New media opens up space in cyberspace. This includes space, object, environment, reality, self, and identity. Virtual is also often referred to as one of the characteristics of postmodern culture and technologically advanced society. 6) Simulation. New media can bring a sensation to its users. Feel firsthand what happened to an event or information. A combination of audio, visual, and other sensory stimuli will manipulate the user's body and mind [10].

### ***Theory and Gratification (Use and Fulfillment of Needs)***

This theory tries to explain how audiences choose the media they want. The audience/audience actively chooses and has different needs and desires in consuming media [11]. According to its founders, Elihu Katz, Jay G. Blumler, and Michael Gurevitch (1960), uses and gratifications theory examines the origins of psychological and social needs, which generate certain expectations from the mass media or other sources, lead to different patterns of media exposure, and lead to the fulfillment of needs and other consequences [12].

Uses and Gratification theory is touted as one of the most popular theories in the study of mass communication. This theory proposes the idea that individual differences cause audiences to search for, use, and respond to media content differently due to various social and psychological factors that differ among individual audiences. Usefulness and satisfaction theory focuses on audiences as consumers of mass media, and not on the message conveyed. This theory views that the audience in using the media is goal-oriented, active, and discriminatory. The audience is judged to know their needs and to know and be responsible for the choice of media that can meet their needs [13].

## **3 Methodology**

This research method uses descriptive qualitative research. Bogdan and Biglen [14] define qualitative research methods as research procedures that produce descriptive data

in the form of written or spoken words and observable behavior. Kirk and Miller (1996) also define qualitative research as a particular tradition of social science that relies on observing humans and their relationships with these people. The process of qualitative research involves important efforts, such as asking questions, collecting specific data from participants, analyzing data inductively from specific themes to general themes, and interpreting the meaning of the data. This type of qualitative research is based on the local context in which the phenomenon occurs, the generalization of research results to a larger object of research or other situations is the root of the problem [15].

The data collection technique in this study involved three components, namely interviews. Interviews were conducted with key informants who had been determined using a purposive procedure. The key informants selected were the Chairman of the Indonesian Television Journalists Association (IJTI) Representative of North Sumatra Budiman Amin Tanjung, Head of the Nusantara Metro TV Desk Mohammad Hafizni, a journalist for tvOne Medan Bureau named Nofri Affandi, and media observer Arifin Saleh Siregar. This source is used by researchers with primary sources. Then, observation, and documentation are used as research as secondary sources. Additional sources are taken from observations made by the author, then references from books, internet, websites related to the object of research.

## 4 Discussion

Journalists are at the forefront of providing correct information to the public regarding the Covid-19 news. The news presented contains clear facts, is not artificial, accurate, and does not contain opinions, especially those that spread hoax news which ultimately misleads the public. Since February 2020, the crew of television journalists has begun to feel the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, peaking in March 2020. Many television broadcast productions have experienced a decline in productivity due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Television journalists began to change their work patterns. From field coverage to indoor coverage. This change in journalistic work is in line with the government's policy of imposing Large-Scale Restrictions (PSBB) in the capital city of Jakarta and has an impact on television journalists in the regions. Reports carried out in the field are changed and transferred to the room. Some journalists make their homes a place for news coverage. This is because the interviewee uses technology in virtual form and then the journalist records according to the wishes of the television company. The work process carried out by these journalists unwittingly reduces the productivity of journalists in the field.

Head of the Nusantara MetroTV Jakarta Desk Moh Hafizni denied the work productivity of the journalist profession during the Covid-19 pandemic according to Hafizni (2021). Journalists' work has not changed in news coverage. Only, the pattern was changed temporarily. This change is due to the increasing number of coronaviruses that are increasingly rampaging in Indonesia. Several television journalists were affected by the large number of journalists who were exposed to the coronavirus, coupled with government policies that limited the movement of the public in general [16].

*“During the pandemic, the work of journalists has not changed in their work. Especially in news coverage, nothing has changed. Everything is the same as before. What has changed is the work pattern. Before the pandemic came, journalists covered the field directly with news objects. Also, direct to the resource persons. Well, now the pattern is changing into the house. Is it print media or online media? There are also advantages, during this Covid-10 pandemic, journalists can work online via Whats App, virtual interviews, zoom meetings, google met, or google skype. The point is there is no change in reporting, just a different work pattern.” (Mohammad Hafizni, Head of MetroTV Desk).*

According to Hafizni (2021), in practice, there is no change in the news coverage presented by television journalists. This can be seen when news broadcasts broadcast on news television related to Covid-19 persist and do not reduce the quality of work productivity of journalists working in the field. In carrying out their journalistic duties in the field, the facts found are television journalists are often faced with the reality of concerns about the Covid-19 pandemic. Not a few, while carrying out reporting duties some were exposed to the coronavirus.

TVOne reporter Nofri Affandi acknowledged the reality of these concerns. He said that while reporting in Batam, Riau Islands Province to cover the repatriation of Indonesian citizens from Wuhan, China, he had difficulty reporting.

*“I’m having a hard time finding N95 masks. Strict implementation from outside airports. Keeping from resource persons the procedures to be carried out. This condition came to me when I was covering the field. On the one hand, I am worried about being infected with the coronavirus, on the other hand, it is my obligation to cover while in Batam. What is clear, is I work with enthusiasm even though it is not fun, I still worry about covering the news.” (Nofri Affandi, tvOne Journalist)*

When he was reporting in Batam, he was still worried because he didn’t get facilities according to the applicable operational standards. The difficulty of getting a good mask based on the standards of the Indonesian Ministry of Health is something that deserves attention.

The tvOne journalist above when delivering his news coverage is not wearing a mask. This proves that at the beginning of the spread of Covid-19 in Indonesia, it was very difficult to obtain health protocol facilities. This concern causes the work productivity of journalists to decrease, although not drastically.

Seeing the gait of journalists in the field, the vulnerability to the spread of the coronavirus is very strong. Budiman Amin Tanjung, Chair of the North Sumatra IJTI, admitted that journalists are vulnerable when covering the field during the Covid-19 pandemic. According to AJI records, in the March-September 2020 period, at least 242 journalists were exposed to Covid-19. Budiman said the data did not explain how many died and how many survived Covid-19.

*“This number could be more in reality on the ground because often the cause of the death of journalists is not disclosed. Not infrequently his death was not announced publicly. Although there is no accurate data, dozens of journalists in North Sumatra have certainly been exposed to Covid-19. However, we are grateful*

*that they are generally able to get through a crisis and critical times. Some of them can work. So, this fact makes television journalists into a dilemma. On the one hand, running coverage must exist and be complete with pictures, but on the other hand, journalists are haunted by threats to the threat of exposure to Covid-19.” (Budiman Amin Tanjung, Chairman of the Indonesian Television Journalists Association (IJTI) North Sumatra)*

To strengthen the immunity of journalists, according to Budiman Amin Tanjung, his party proposed to the North Sumatra Provincial Government to vaccinate journalists. This effort is one way to allay concerns and maintain the number of journalists exposed to Covid-19.

According to Budiman (2021), the productivity of journalists cannot be separated from the procurement of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) provided by press companies to journalists while working in the field. Many press companies such as television management do not provide advanced facilities for journalists who work in the regions. Budiman Amin Tanjung said the role of IJTI is to encourage television management to facilitate all journalists in their workplaces. Almost every journalist who joins IJTI admits that their television company does not fully facilitate the progress of reporting in the field.

Television journalists admitted that they had been facilitated by television companies to implement health protocols when reporting in the field. But it was deemed insufficient. Even considered very lacking. Due to the lack of provision of health protocols for television journalists, the number of journalists who are exposed is feared to be increasing. This is where the role of the Indonesian Television Journalists Association is to encourage television companies to contribute to facilitating all television journalists with health protocols when working in the field.

Based on the information above, Budiman explained that working as a television journalist is very dilemmatic. This is because it is different from other print or online journalists who can use technology to obtain news material. Television journalists must be in the field, because of the need for visual images of the cover material they create.

Mohammad Hafizni, Head of the Jakarta MetroTV Desk, said that of the 280 MetroTV contributors throughout Indonesia, they are still carrying out their duties and functions as journalists. Several MetroTV journalists were forced to work from home. Reports from within the home are carried out by MetroTV dues due to the lack of health facilities they have. Despite the lack of health facilities, MetroTV journalists are encouraged to continue working, as usual, doing coverage. However, since the last two years, the volume of coverage of MetroTV contributors is considered to have tended to decrease. This is because the Covid-19 pandemic that has hit Indonesia in the last two years has not ended [16].

Amid the current Covid-19 pandemic, journalists at MetroTV have reduced their activities to meet face-to-face with resource persons. The volume is indeed reduced, but that does not mean there is no coverage for the resource persons. Interviews were conducted virtually to avoid crowds of people.

The coverage of almost all television management turns the coverage into a resource person. At least the coverage that was originally face-to-face turned into virtual coverage. This coverage seemed to meet face-to-face with sources, even though it was done

virtually. Before Covid-19 hit Indonesia, the productivity of journalists in finding news was very high. The quality is also something to be proud of because the visual images and the news material match very well. But unfortunately, during the Covid-19 pandemic, the quality and productivity of news decreased.

The decline in news productivity is felt by almost all television management. This decrease was due to the number of journalists who were exposed to Covid-19. Journalists who are self-isolating at the General Hospital (RSU) cannot function properly. The number of journalists exposed to the coronavirus is increasing day by day. However, television editorial management does not remain silent in reporting so that the news presented is still complete with visuals.

During live coverage, television reporters prepare some important things before going out into the field. For example, preparing standard masks, maintaining distance (physical distancing) from resource persons, and one more thing if it is not possible to meet with resource persons, journalists conduct interviews with google skype or zoom meetings and others. This change in reporting patterns is carried out to maintain the quality of news coverage that will be broadcast on television.

TVOne journalist Nofri Affandi said that he had changed the pattern of coverage so that he would not be exposed to the coronavirus. Self-protection is very important, as well as efforts to maintain the value of news production which has recently been declining.

Another factor besides changes in news coverage patterns is to see why journalists' news productivity has decreased. Apparently, according to media observer Arifin Saleh Sregar, this decline in productivity was due to the increasing number of journalists exposed to Covid. Tired of having no ideas which ultimately lowers the level of reasoning and productivity of journalists. According to him, the decline in the productivity of television journalists is also due to the threat of a decrease in salary/honor if they do not cover according to standard operating procedures in the editorial kitchen. This decrease in salary/honor occurred in almost all television management. Several television managements have fired journalists and were expelled from employee status for not working to standards. These threats are what we often see, and the saddest part is that when they are laid off, they are not given severance pay [17].

Arifin gave an example of how the CNN Indonesia television station had reported that until July 2020 the Chief Editor of CNN Indonesia had not sent a large number of journalists to cover many events outdoors or in the open. This includes limiting inviting resource persons to attend the studio for an interview. Television station managers don't want their journalists to be made news objects or included in statistics because there are additional Covid-19 patients. Not because they want to report the case of the Covid-19 pandemic, instead television journalists become the subject of media coverage because they are exposed to Covid-19.

## 5 Conclusion

The Covid-19 pandemic is a real threat to television journalists in Indonesia. One of the real threats is the increasing number of journalists exposed to Covid-19. So they have to change the work pattern of television journalists in covering the field. This change in work patterns is to maintain the productivity of journalists' work.



The main factor causing the work productivity of journalists to decline. First, is the vulnerability of Covid-19 transmission during field coverage. The second is the lack of health protocol equipment facilities. So that journalists do not cover directly to the sources, but do it from inside the room. Third, changing the work pattern of journalists, by keeping a distance when covering the field, wearing standard masks, and not reducing salaries/honors.

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