Activities and Communication Patterns of the West Java Provincial Government During the Covid-19 Pandemic Through Twitter

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Abstract. The Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia was a challenge for the West Java Provincial Government since the first case was found in residents of Depok City. Inevitably, it caused panic and confusion of information in the community. Therefore, the West Java Provincial Government was demanded to overcome panic and uncertainty in society, which could be fulfilled by performing appropriate government communications. Massive and accessible social media was one of the communication media the West Java Government selected to convey various information and programs to handle Covid-19. This study aims to determine the activities and communication patterns of the West Java Provincial Government through the Twitter accounts of @Jabarprovgoid and @Pikobar_jabar by examining their activities and interactions with the public during the pandemic. The research range of @Jabarprovgoid was from February 2020 to December 2021, while @Pikobar_jabar was from February 2021 to December 2021. This study employed a qualitative research method and the data were analyzed using NVivo12 plus. The results revealed that the West Java Government actively communicated through Twitter accounts @Jabarprovgoid and @Pikobar_jabar to convey various Covid-19 information. The community responded well, as evidenced by the emerging interactions and patterns. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the West Java Government played a significant role in providing education and conveying information and news by involving various stakeholder accounts or institutions.

Keywords: Government communication · communication activities and patterns · Twitter · Covid-19

1 Introduction

Social media is a means of communication with a crucial role for the government to convey information to the public. Government communication occurs through the government's official social media. A report entitled Digital 2021: The Latest Insights Into the State of Digital reveals that out of 274.9 million people in Indonesia, 170 million have used social media, yielding a penetration rate of around 61.8 percent (Stephanie, 2021). Various social media platforms have changed the form of communication government agencies use. The formal style has turned into an informal one, along with changes in

the public, especially with the Covid-19 pandemic, such as government communication through Twitter (Eom, Hwang, & Kim, 2018).

The West Java Provincial Government initially paid attention to this issue as two Depok residents were identified as having Covid-19 after returning from a visit abroad and became the first cases in Indonesia (Ihsanuddin, 2020). Since the announcement of Covid-19 in Indonesia, the Province of West Java has become an area with an increasing number of exposures. As of August 25, 2021, the West Java Province recorded 5,464 Covid-19 cases (Tribunnews, 2021).

The election of the West Java Government in this case study is due to the highlight of the first case and the high level of vulnerability to exposure, considering that the province has a dense population of around 48.68 million people with an area of 35,377.76 km. Moreover, West Java also has high population mobility, especially to the capital city of DKI Jakarta, with the highest transmission rate. Since the beginning, West Java has been a province with a high transmission rate, making it one of the priorities for handling by the president, along with seven other provinces (CNN, 2020).

Hence, the West Java Government took various efforts to accelerate the decline in Covid-19 cases. Various policies were implemented to limit the community's mobility and close various places to minimize the spread of Covid-19. One of the policies imposed by the West Java Government was to use the internet as a medium of communication with the public. Statistical data unveil that social media users in West Java have reached 16.4 million, with Bandung City becoming the largest user, followed by Bekasi and Bogor (Parno, 2020), placing Indonesia as the sixth highest Twitter users, with 17.55 as depicted in the following figure. Subsequent paragraphs, however, are indented.
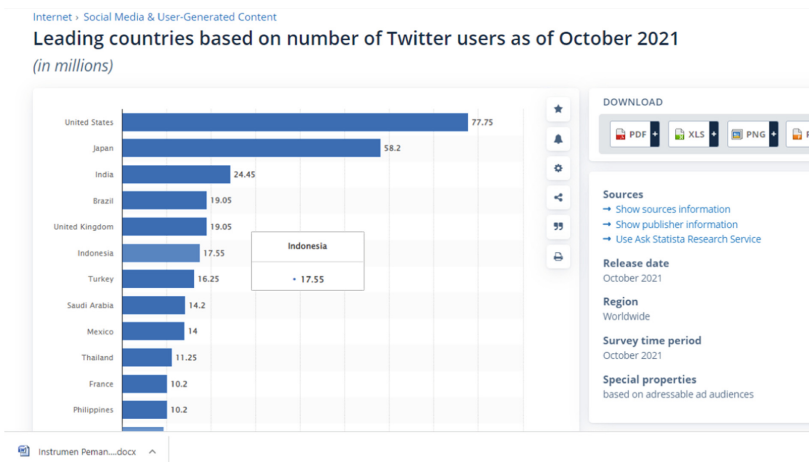
Twitter plays a significant role in conveying information, especially in urban areas with advanced internet networks. It is evidenced by a large number of Indonesians using it. The Global Web Index noted that in 2020, 55.5 million people in Indonesia used gadgets (Global Web Index, 2019).

2 Method

This study employed a qualitative method. Qualitative research methods concern three primary issues: sensitivity to a problem that comes naturally from an environment, the desire to study in-depth, and the existence of phenomena (social activities, events, attitudes, perceptions, and thoughts) in social life (Suwendra, 2018). Moreover, as (Al-Hamdi, Sakir, Suswanta, and Atmojo, 2020) mentioned, five approaches are commonly applied in collecting and analyzing qualitative research data: narrative, phenomenological, grounded theory, ethnographic, and case studies. This research utilized a qualitative descriptive approach by understanding the phenomena and social media activities of the West Java Provincial Government through Twitter to provide in-depth information to readers.

Data were collected from Twitter accounts of the West Java Provincial Government agencies responsible for providing various information in handling Covid-19 in West Java, @Jabarprovgoid and @Pikobar_jabar. This research was conducted from February 2020 to December 2021 for @Jabarprovgoid, and February 2021 to December 2021 for @Pikobar_jabar, when the pandemic in West Java province was still ongoing.

Meanwhile, the data were analyzed descriptively using NVivo 12 Plus software on the Ncapture feature. NVivo 12 Plus was applied to analyze and process numerical data to make it easier to describe and capture phenomena (Mito, Mutiarin, & Nurmandi, 2020). This software could retrieve data from social media and demonstrate the relationship patterns or connected devices. The data obtained produced brief descriptions, charts, category relationships, flowcharts, and the like.

3 Results

3.1 West Java Government Communication Activities During the Covid-19 Pandemic Through Twitter Accounts @Jabarprovgoid and @Pikobar_jabar

Social media is a place that creates a meeting between humans and gives birth to interaction and socialization. Massive and easily accessible social media in disseminating information is one of the reasons why the West Java Government selected it as one of its communication media. In addition, the use of Twitter by the West Java Government aimed to minimize misinformation such as hoaxes and become a means of evaluation of actions or policies it performed (Novianti, Evi. Nugraha, Aat. Sjoraid, 2020).

Twitter accounts @Jabarprovgoid and @Pikobar_jabar displayed a relatively high communication activity seen from their intensity of Tweets, as displayed in Fig. 1

The windows photo viewer analysis exhibited the role of the West Java Provincial Government Twitter accounts @jabarprovgoid and @Pikobar_jabar in conveying information. The "https" dominated the delivery of information as a link to news and messages, allowing the public to access and discover information more deeply.

In addition, the West Java Government specifically utilized Twitter to build interaction with various stakeholders regarding the pandemic handling. The following figure displays the communication activity and intensity through the Twitter accounts @Jabarprovgoid and @Pikobar_jabar from February 2020 to December 2021, the initial discovery of Covid-19 in West Java until the time this research was carried out (Fig. 2).
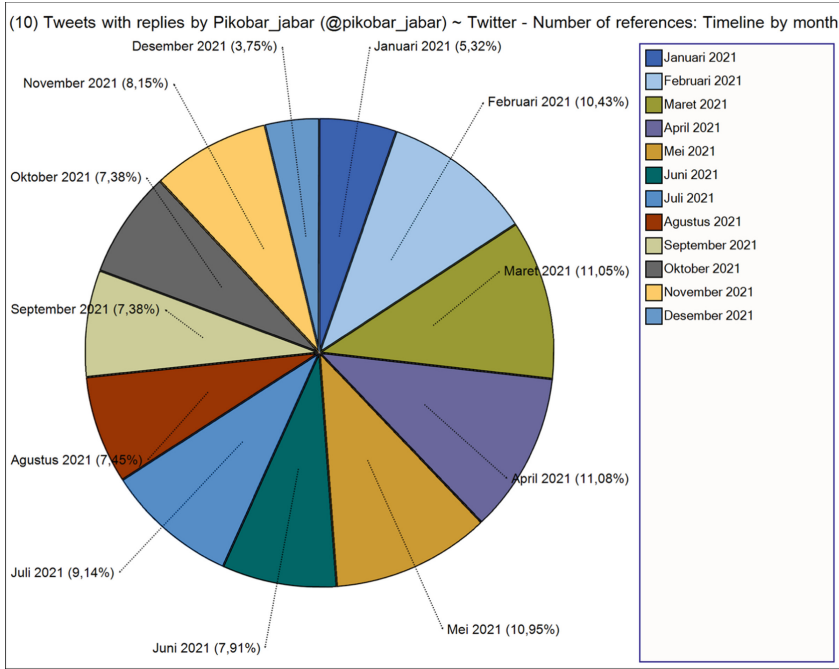
@Jabarprovgoid	@Pikobar_jabar

Fig. 1. NVivo 12 Plus Windows Photo Viewer from Both Twitter Accounts. Source: Processed by the researchers using NVivo 12 Plus

Fig. 2. Account @Jabarprovgoid. *Source* Processed by the researchers using NVivo 12 Plus

The Ncapture results on the Twitter account @Jabarprovgoid signify that the activity and intensity of communication have increased and decreased. The highest activity was in July 2020 at 8.33%, illustrating the magnitude of the @Jabarprovgoid account activity during the increase in Covid-19 in that month. It was also related to the vaccination program that must be socialized to the public. Atalia Pararatya Kamil, the Deputy Head of the Vaccination Division, stated the target was still far from expectations. Herd immunity

Fig. 3. Account: @Pikobar_jabar. *Source* Processed by the researchers using NVivo 12 Plus

should reach 37.9 million people vaccinated. Meanwhile, until May, the number of new vaccines only reached 12.7 million (Pradana, 2021).

The Twitter account @Pikobar_jabar helped disseminate information on the West Java Government's innovation in overcoming the Covid-19 pandemic in the form of applications and websites discussing and providing information about the pandemic, vaccinations, and hospital facilities. The account was present in January. Thus, this research obtained Ncapture in the January-December 2021 range. The Twitter account @Pikobar_jabar spread information with the highest intensity of 11.08% in March and the lowest activity in October and September of 7.38% (Fig. 3).

3.2 Communication Patterns of Twitter Accounts @Jabarprovgoid and @Pikobar_jabar of the West Java Government During the Covid-19 Pandemic Crisis

The Covid-19 pandemic has changed the pattern of social interaction. Social media is one of the government's tools to keep in touch with the community during limited conditions. It is an alternative for the government to communicate and disseminate information more broadly. Organizations utilize social media as a communication tool to improve their performance (Gagliardi et al., 2021).

The following figure exhibits the analysis results from NVivo 12 Plus, unveiling the relationship of communication interactions carried out by the @Jabarprovgoid and @Pikobar_jabar Twitter accounts.
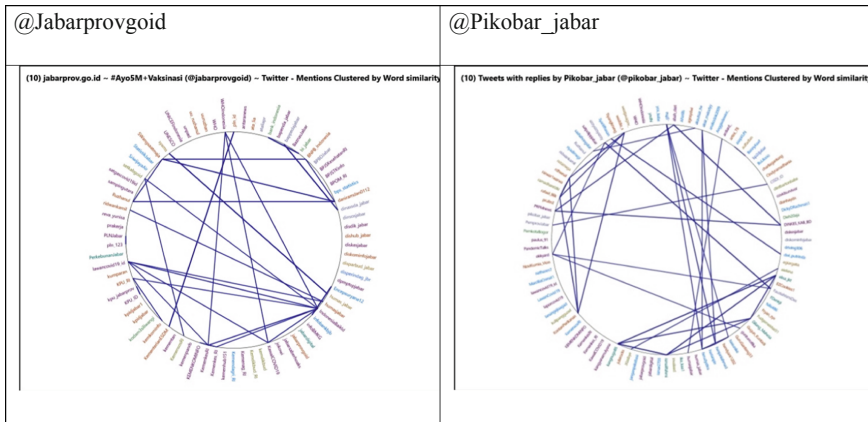
| @Jabarprovgoid | @Pikobar_jabar |

Fig. 4. *Source* Processed by the researchers using NVivo 12 Plus

Figure 4 implies that the West Java Government utilized Twitter to interact with the community during the Covid-19 pandemic through related stakeholders: @diskesjabar, @Jabarprovgoid, @humasjabar, and @Pikobar_jabar. The West Java Government also made various efforts to invite the public to obey health protocols and carry out vaccinations to minimize the spread of Covid-19. It was demonstrated through the progress of West Java through its six regions (Bandung City, Cimahi City, West Bandung Regency, Bekasi Regency, Majalengka Regency, and Garut Regency) that managed to leave the red zone (DESKJABAR, 2020) (Figs. 5 and 6).

The previous images are the results of Windows Photo Viewer on the hashtags of both accounts. The results disclosed that the @Jabarprovgoid account was dominated by #jabarprovgoid with 23.52%, #jabartresponcovid19 with 11.92%, and #jabarjuar-alahirbatin with 9.23%. Meanwhile, other hashtags ranged from 3.0% to 0.31%, such as #CovidResponsibilityBersama with 2.93% and #jabarsiapvacnasi with 1.31%. Furthermore, the @Pikobar_jabar account, with hashtag dominance #covid19 of 15.70% and #Pikodata of 15.80%, signifies that the account conveyed much information based on its application and website to social media, considering the enthusiasm of people accessing Twitter more often than other social media platforms. In addition, other hashtags were also present, such as #ppkm #pikocampaign #rdtantigen and others with a dominance of 3.20% to 0.37%.

Government communication by utilizing hashtags has become part of the plan to dominate Twitter in disseminating information. People accessed Twitter by looking at the trend based on the hashtags. Moreover, with a large number of Twitter users, the large government communication costs to disseminate policies could be reduced using the hashtags tool on Twitter as a means of socialization (Bruns & Burgess, 2011). The communication patterns on Twitter indicate that the West Java Government involved other Twitter accounts with many followers to disseminate information to have a broad reach.

Fig. 5. Windows Photo Viewer on the hashtags of @jabarprovgoid

Fig. 6. Windows Photo Viewer on the hashtags of @pikobar_jabar

4 Discussion

Communication is part of the social process. The communication process continues to run dynamically, is complex, and is constantly changing (Hasan, 2016). Communication has a crucial role in exchanging information. In government communication, various information regarding policies or programs is conveyed to the public. Moreover, the public can also provide feedback to the government (Anggreani, Purnomo, & Kasiwi, 2020).

According to William J Seller, the communication components include source or communicator, message, media, receiver or communicant, influence, feedback, and environment (Cangara, 2016). Communication should produce feedback from the communicant. The feedback has different impacts. The communication impacts can be divided into three: cognitive, affective, and behavioral (Rahmawati, 2019). It is necessary to disclose information from the government to the public by increasing the sense of influencing each other in limited and trapped situations to minimize obstacles in government communication (Ardiyanti, 2020).

Social media changes the communication style in society, from conventional to all digital or modern (Setiadi, 2014). Social media is an application based on the internet built on the ideology and technology of Web 2.0 and can exchange user-generated content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). It makes communication more effective and reaches a wider audience. Government communication through social media also has a different approach according to the goals (Guerrero-Solé & Lopez-Gonzalez, 2019). In addition, social media has become a community tool to monitor the government, especially on issues of governance, social inclusion, and privacy in the spotlight (Montalvan Castilla & Pursiainen, 2019). It has become one of the government's strategies in utilizing and dominating social media as a means of interaction and creating an effective pattern to reach the wider public. Therefore, social media is a tool for the government to reduce the gaps in government policy-making (Heiss & Matthes, 2019).

The use of social media in the context of government also has a different approach, in line with the goals desired by the government (Guerrero-Solé & Lopez-Gonzalez, 2019). It is inseparable from the concept of social media, providing positive impacts. The concept of government to citizens (G2C) supports the relationship between the government and society (Pardo, Nam, & Burke, 2012). The increasing role of social media can become a tool for the public in monitoring the government and bringing issues of governance, social inclusion, and privacy, into the spotlight (Montalvan Castilla & Pursiainen, 2019). Even today, the government is not the only one using social media to absorb public aspirations, other organizations in the private sector also do so (Gagliardi, Niglia, Misuraca, & Pasi, 2021).

Previous research discovered that Covid-19 information routinely shared by the government to the public through social media, one of which was Twitter, made the public more socialized toward government policies. Accordingly, socialization spread widely and was effective and efficient. The disseminated information provided an understanding of Covid-19. Communication is also a necessity in strengthening public relations and government organizations by implementing transparency (Yen, 2020). Other studies revealed that social media has become a means of public space fast in providing information and broad opinions (Chen Emily, Lerman Kristina, Ferrara Emilio, 2020).

Research conducted on the Twitter of the Mayor of Seoul also depicted its role as a communication bridge between the government and the community (Eom et al., 2018).

The results of this research corroborate the findings of several previous studies disclosing that social media had an essential role in government communication, especially during limited conditions due to the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition, it could provide space for the community and the government to continue interacting in two directions. Twitter accounts @Jabarprovgoid and @Pikobar_jabar played a vital role as the official accounts of the West Java Government in disseminating information about the Covid-19 pandemic. Twitter is one of the tools to help the government during the pandemic. Moroever, the number of hoaxes in digital media requires the government to be the first institution to convey the truth using Twitter. The results of the Indonesia Politics Research and Consulting (IPRC) survey unveiled that the West Java Government received an assessment of community satisfaction in handling the Covid-19 pandemic, reaching 84.5% of the total 1,200 respondents (Teguh, 2022). Twitter accounts @Jabarprovgoid and @Pikobar_jabar not only conveyed information and policies but also responded to feedback from the community and involved them in handling Covid-19 by playing a role through the 3M movement and vaccines.

5   Conclusion

Twitter accounts @Jabarprovgoid and @Pikobar_jabar had a relatively high level of communication activity, as seen by the volume of Tweets posted on both accounts. Subsequently, "https" dominated the distribution of information as a connection to news and messages, allowing the public to access and discover more information from the shared content. It indicates the scale of the @Jabarprovgoid account's activity with the rise of Covid-19 in July 2020, tied to the vaccination program that must be publicized.

Through accounts @diskesjabar, @Jabarprovgoid, @humasjabar, and @Pikobar_jabar, the West Java Government utilized Twitter to connect with the community during the Covid-19 pandemic. The top three hashtags on @Jabarprovgoid were #jabarprovgoid (23.52%), #jabartresponcovid19 (11.92%), and #jabarjuaralahirbatin (9.23%). The account of @Pikobar_jabar was dominated by #covid19 (15.70%) and #Pikodata (15.80%). In addition, communication patterns revealed that the community actively responded to the Covid-19 pandemic using hashtags as part of a campaign to promote government services.

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