

## **SOCIAL NETWORK ANALYSIS: PUBLIC TRUST AND DIGITAL MOVEMENT OF THE COVID-19 ERA IN INDONESIA**

Muhammad Iqbal<sup>1</sup>

### **Abstract**

The partial lockdown in April, 2020 that was implemented by the Indonesian government during the COVID-19 pandemic drew a lot of criticism from the public. Most of the criticism arose from the weak enforcement of the partial lockdown that was implemented. In addition, many people rejected the use of social restrictions, which had serious negative implications for the economy and the poor in Indonesia. This study examines the public's responses to the benefits and disadvantages of implementing the Community Activity Restrictions (PPKM) policy on Twitter. The results show that there are two clusters in the conversations on Twitter, which are the Pro-opposition cluster and X Cluster. Negative tendencies and opinions tend to dominate the public conversation on Twitter regarding PPKM policies, which has had significant implications for public confidence in the government's ability to handle the spread of COVID-19 in Indonesia

*Keywords:* Social Network Analysis, Digital Movement, Social Media, Public Trust, COVID-19

### **1. BACKGROUND**

Digital media makes it easy for the users to share information, while the sources of information can come from anywhere. However, the development of digital media has been so fast that the public's lack of understanding and unpreparedness towards digital media has created the potential for abuse in personal and social life (Ediger et al., 2010). Nevertheless, social media has been a key part of the development of the Internet and it offers many ways to interact, communicate and socialize with exciting supporting features

(Barisione & Michailidou, 2017; Barisione & Airoidi, 2019).

In 2020, various stories on the theme of COVID-19 colored the news in print and electronic mass media, and quickly became the central theme that was often discussed in chats on social media. Along with the development of information technology, public access to the latest information is also increasingly wide open thanks to Internet-based social media platforms. The ease of sharing and getting news through social media has led many

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Political Science National Cheng Kung University, Republic of China (Taiwan)  
E-mail: U18097019@ncku.edu.tw

people to use social media as a means of entertainment and a place to get the latest information. In addition, mass media is used as a medium to convey aspirations for performance, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic (Purwaningrum, Saifullah, & Sudana, 2021).

Since the World Health Organization issued their first international warning about the threat posed by COVID-19, the Indonesian government's response has often been non-serious (e.g., in anticipating the possibility of the virus entering Indonesia). The government's response, the government's way of communicating, and the government's readiness to face a health crisis are considered by many to be lacking, at least according to several research organizations. This became even more difficult when the government was forced to limit face-to-face meetings for the press. The government's publication activities that previously relied on mass media had to find alternative ways to get the message across, such as through social media platforms (including YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook). Government agencies in many countries have now begun to explore the use of social media in crisis management. In the UK, for example, the government used Twitter to clarify rumors and identify suspects during the 2011 riots using only the hashtag (hash sign '#') in response to social media users (Panagiotopoulos, Bigdeli, & Sams, 2014). When the Hurricane Sandy crisis hit the United States in 2012, the local governments used Twitter to develop public services involving social media users (Chatfield & Reddick, 2018). The Indonesian government has also used Twitter to work with the

public to increase awareness (e.g., it gave an early warning of the 2012 tsunami) and also increase efficiency in public information services (Chatfield, Scholl, & Brajawidagda, 2013). The use of social media by the government can also encourage citizen involvement by opening interactions in the online space.

Twitter is used to write tweets and respond to tweets made by account owners (Himmelboim, Smith, Rainie, Shneiderman, & Espina, 2017). Therefore, information or news on Twitter can be distributed massively in a short time. This especially true in Indonesia where many Internet citizens are quick to discuss the reports of an event. Previously, Zuhri (2020) had conducted research that discussed the construction of discourse built by the @najwashihab and @jrksid accounts on their Instagram content. The results of this study show that the similarities between the uploads of the two accounts can be seen from the concern and reaction of people affected by COVID-19. There are also similarities (e.g., both display creativity with a visual style).

Concerning the rise of public figures who act as influencers and buzzers, Sugiono (2020) researched the 'buzzer' phenomenon in Indonesia. The results show that the term buzzer has shifted into a concept that is generally in a political context and has negative stereotypes. Based on these studies, it can be concluded that an event that is reported massively and continuously will create a hyperbole effect in society. In this case, the buzzer is considered to have an essential role in shaping a topic of conversation on social media; while the various information conveyed through social media is one of the sources of reference for the buzzer's followers (Zuhri, 2020).

The rise of buzzers who work on behalf of government supporters has had significant implications for poor communication between the government and the public. Communications by the Indonesian government at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic received negative reviews from at least two non-governmental organizations (NGOs), namely the Institute for Economic and Social Research, Education and Information (LP3ES) and the Institute for Development of Economics and Finance (INDEF). LP3ES noted that the government issued 37 blunder statements in the first 100 days of the pandemic (LP3ES 2020). Among them are the jokes of the coordinating minister for Political, Legal, and Security Affairs, Mahfud MD, who said that the coronavirus could not enter Indonesia because of permission problems. Meanwhile, the Head of the National Disaster Management Agency (BNPB), Doni Monardo, then joked about how drinking herbal medicine makes Indonesians immune from the virus. Even President Joko Widodo asked the Indonesian people not to be paranoid about the coronavirus and keep the doors of foreign tourism open (Mawardi 2020).

Unsurprisingly, the results of the INDEF survey showed that 66.28% of Indonesians had a negative response to communications made by the government. Public communication carried out by the government during the pandemic was still ineffective, due to inconsistency and unpreparedness in dealing with risks or crises (Ardiyanti, 2020). The analysis of public perceptions and emotions on the government's handling of COVID-19, compiled from their digital footprints, also show that

the main problem faced by the government was 'trust' or public trust in the government, through information provided to the public (Prihantoro, Rakhman, & Ramadhani, 2021). The transparency of data submitted by the government has increased trust. Meanwhile, if data is closed to the public, then this will create a sense of distrust that can cause panic. These findings have implications for the argument that the government needs to build trust as a priority. One way to create trust is to ensure the transparency of information. To convey transparent information, the government needs to implement an excellent public communication strategy (Ediger et al., 2010).

Many of the policies carried out by the government, especially in dealing with pandemic problems, have also entered the public spotlight on social media. The partial lockdown implemented by the Indonesian government has drawn a lot of criticism from the public because of the government's weak enforcement, even from people who reject the concept of social restrictions. These regulations have had severe implications for the poor economy in Indonesia.

This narrative was later used by the opposition of the Indonesian government to criticize the government. This does not merely criticize various policies taken by the government but it also leads to a narrative that wants to reduce President Jokowi's leadership. Based on this explanation, the author took the initiative to analyze community movements on Twitter during the 2021 pandemic.

## 2. REJECTION ENFORCEMENT OF RESTRICTIONS ON COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES (PPKM) POLICY

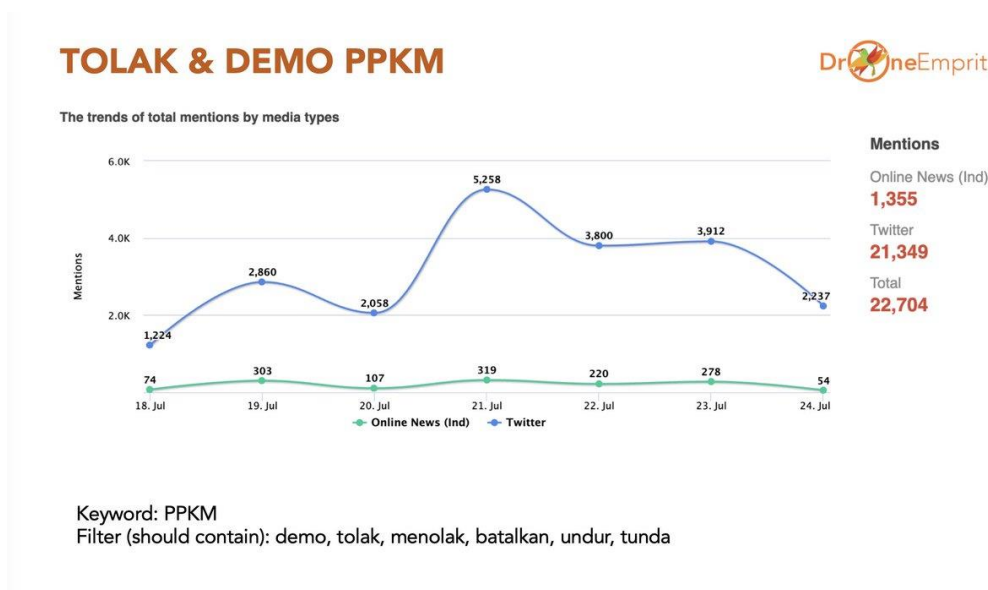
Many people rejected the existence of Emergency PPKM and its extension because these regulations can cause harm to small communities who cannot earn a living to meet their daily needs. The Emergency PPKM (PPKM Darurat) policy is considered to have cut off the economy. One trader even sent a subpoena to the president through the Ministry of State Secretariat and continued to file a lawsuit at the Administrative Court for violating the law. Article 55 of Law No. 6 of 2018 concerning health quarantine stipulates that if a regional quarantine is carried out, then the government is obliged to bear all the necessities of life for the people living in that area. Although there was a change in the regional quarantine policy to Emergency PPKM, there are still substantial similarities in its application

(Bin Muhammad Alkatiri, Nadiah, & Nasution, 2020).

The Emergency PPKM implementation was carried out without the responsibility to bear all of the necessities of life for the people living in the area, which is contradictory and constitutes a violation of the law. Therefore, if the Emergency PPKM implementation continues without being accompanied by the responsibility to bear all of the necessities of life for the community, then a lawsuit will be filed for violating the ruling law at the Administrative Court.

The rejection of this policy was also carried out on social media, especially on Twitter. Many Indonesian people who disagreed with the implementation of the PPKM policy expressed their opinions on Twitter. The opinions expressed by the public have many negative meanings and criticisms for the government. Figure 1 shows the trend of public scrutiny regarding PPKM policies in Indonesia.

**Figure 1:** Trend of public rejection of PPKM policies in Indonesia

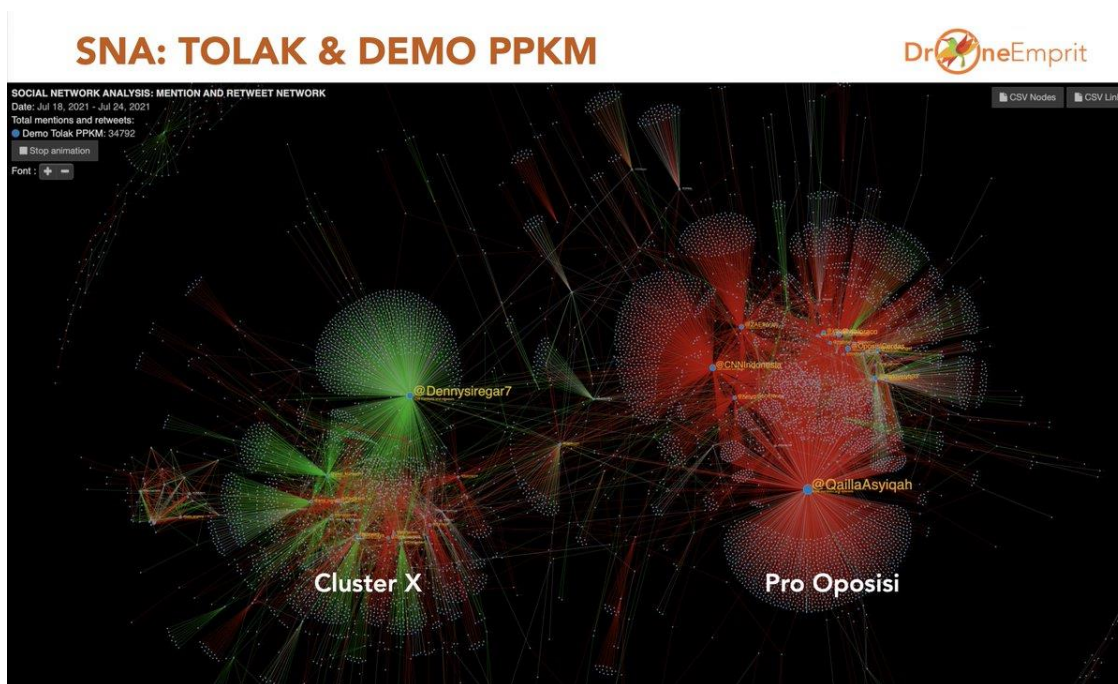


Source: DroneEmprit Analysis

Figure 1 shows the public's reaction to the PPKM policy that was imposed by the Indonesian government. The results of the social network analysis conducted from July 18, 2021, to July 24, 2021, showed that 22,704

tweets had negative sentiments or rejected the PPKM policy. The peak of the negative trend occurred on July 21, 2021. Mass demonstrations also followed the peak of this trend in many regions of Indonesia.

**Figure 2:** Social network analysis of rejecting PPKM



Source: DroneEmprit Analysis

During this period, the narrative of the rejection of PPKM and demonstrations against PPKM were enlivened by two clusters, namely the Pro - opposition cluster and X Cluster. Many reported and encouraged protests against PPKM in various cities from the Pro - opposition cluster, which were claimed to have been carried out by multiple elements (e.g., students, university students, merchants, and online motorcycle taxis). In X Cluster, some rejected PPKM, asking that it be canceled because it may make the hungry lower-class explode with anger and carry out rebellions. In the SNA map, there are no clusters of students or students who also raise the narrative

against PPKM or call for demonstrations against PPKM. The majority have been Pro-opposition.

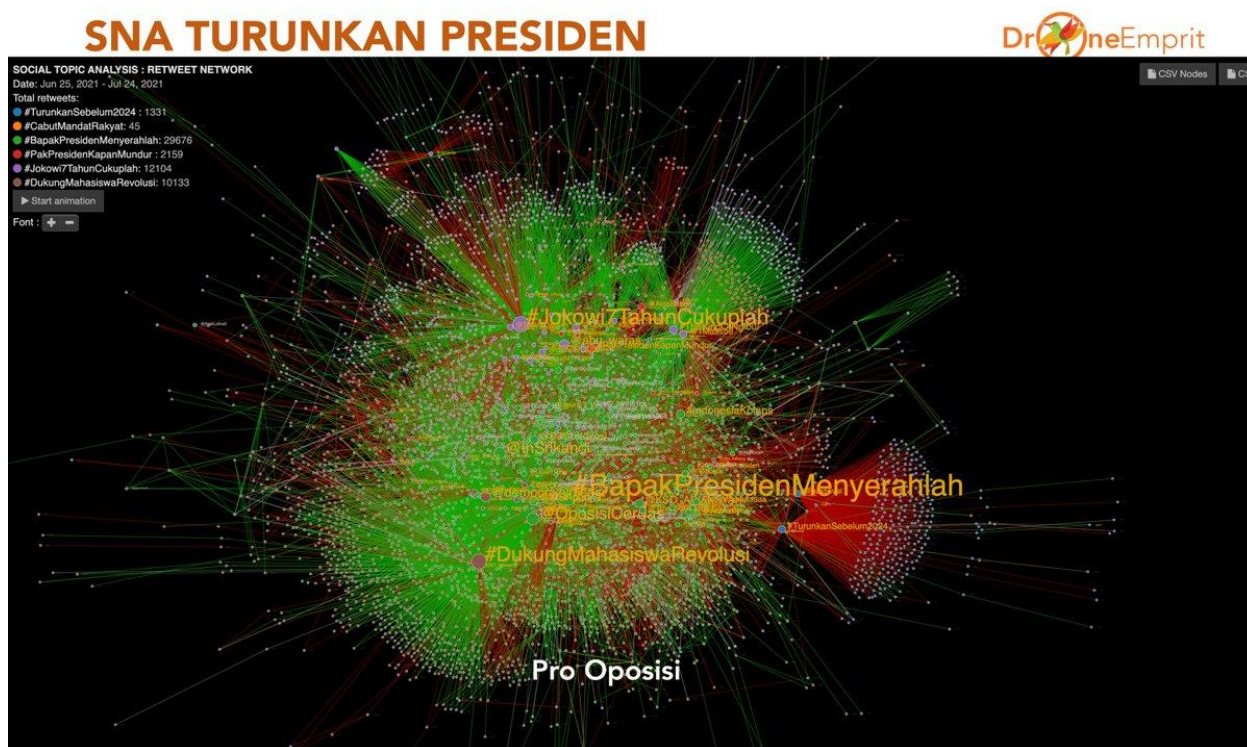
### **3. PRO-OPPOSITION IMPLICATIONS AND REACTIONS ON TWITTER**

The relaxation of the PPKM restrictions received a lot of adverse reactions from the public, especially medical personnel. This reaction first appeared on Twitter with the hashtag (#) IndonesiaTerserah (whatever Indonesia) (Rakhman, Ramadhani, & Fatoni, 2021). A PolGov researcher at Gadjah Mada University (UGM), Wegik Prasetyo, said that the use of #IndonesiaTerserah

was a disappointment for medical personnel to the government and society. Medical personnel were disappointed with both the government's relaxation of the PSBB and with the public, who were indifferent to the health protocols that should be applied. So, the hashtag #IndonesiaTerserah was an effort to re - question the commitment of the government and community to fighting the COVID-19 virus. This hashtag was a trending topic on Indonesian Twitter for several days and it became a popular topic

among Twitter residents (Prihantoro et al., 2021). Media users showed their attitude spontaneously by uploading whatever they want on social media without any control from other actors. This movement is called the Digital Movement of Opinion (DMO), which is interpreted as a movement to follow technological developments, especially new media in the form of social media, by spontaneously creating virtual networks between users by commenting on an existing problem (Barisione & Ceron, 2017).

**Figure 3:** Social Network Analysis of the pro-opposition group



Source: DroneEmprit Analysis

During that period, there were at least 11 hashtags whose narratives demanded Jokowi step down, such as #Jokowi7TahunCukupLah (seven years Jokowi is enough), #BapakPresiden Menyerahlah (Mr. President surrender), #2021GantiPresiden (2021 Change President), #JokowiStepDown, #Makzulkan

PresidenGagal (Impeach President fail), #LockdownJokowi, and so on (see Figure 2). These hashtags against Jokowi were consistently created by the Pro-opposition cluster, which changes every week but the narrative is the same.

There are hashtags of support among the pro-Jokowi group but not many, such as #KitaPercayaJokowi (we believe in Jokowi), #Rakyat BersamaJokowi (the people with Jokowi), #JokowiAtasiPandemi (Jokowi overcomes the pandemic). Various parties have conveyed many criticisms of the government's weak handling of the pandemic, both from academics, doctors, epidemiologists, activists, and the wider community. This was one of the sources of the issues that were used by the Pro-opposition group to build a narrative to demote Jokowi.

#### **4. PUBLIC TRUST IN THE COVID-19 ERA**

The government's inability to handle the spread of COVID-19 cases in Indonesia can be analyzed through public trust theory. There are four points where the government can gain trust from the public regarding COVID-19 (Fanani et al., 2020; Prasetyo et al., 2020), as follows:

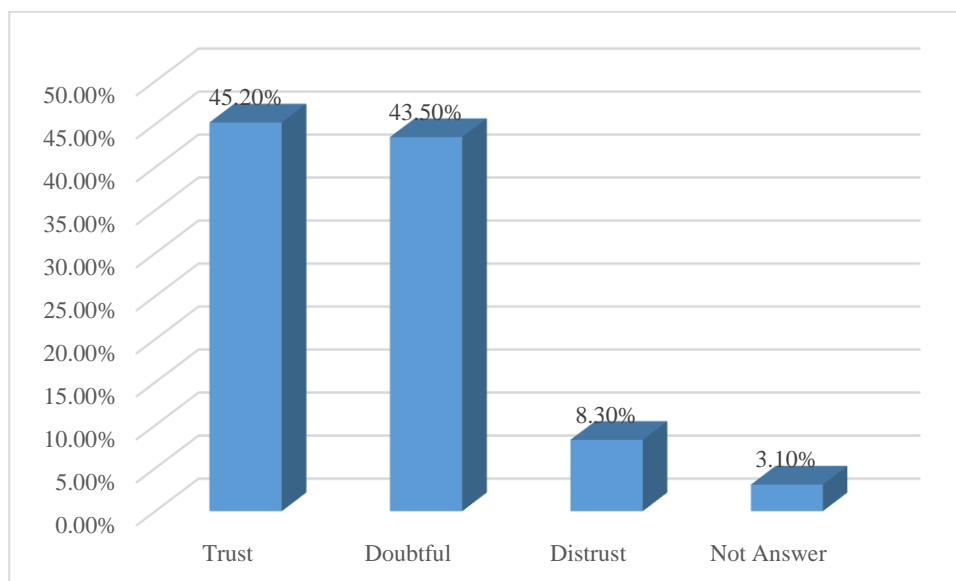
1) Reliability: The government should minimize the uncertainty caused by COVID-19 in the economic, social, and political environment. Netizens perceive that the government is inconsistent in making economic, social, and political policies, which can confuse the community and related stakeholders. The most frequently discussed inconsistency is how government communication between one institution and another often contradicts each other. Meanwhile, policies that often change can strengthen the netizen's hypothesis that government policies are not well-conceived.

2) Responsiveness: Trust in the government can depend on the public's

experiences when receiving services from them. For example, health services and social assistance to the community related to COVID-19. In this context, the Indonesian government was also considered to be slow in mitigating and handling the COVID-19 pandemic. The most discussed problem was the limited availability of medical equipment and personal protective equipment for medical personnel. Due to the lack of supply, many medical personnel had to replace their protective equipment with raincoats and they were forced to use personal protective equipment that did not follow medical standards. Consequently, many people in the Internet community expressed their concerns and worries about the safety of medical personnel who were working at the frontline of the COVID-19 crisis in Indonesia. The government's response to social assistance also fell into the spotlight of Internet citizens. The chaotic distribution of social services by the central and local governments was a major concern. The uneven distribution meant that the data that was used was not synchronized between the central and local governments. This led Internet residents to speculate that the Indonesian government was not ready to respond to the spread of the COVID-19 virus. The implication is that many people are still considered to be underprivileged and directly affected by the spread of the coronavirus, instead of receiving the promised social assistance from the central and local governments.

3) Openness: Open government policies that focus on community engagement and access to information can increase public trust, such as disclosing data on COVID-19 patients. Based on data from katadata.com, people still trust the data provided to them by the government (see Figure 4).

**Figure 4:** Level of confidence in the disclosure of COVID-19 data by the government



Source: KataData.co.id

The Indonesian government currently has a policy of always releasing the latest data on the development of COVID-19. However, this information was only fully disclosed after the government was criticized for its lack of data transparency. Nevertheless, there are still many people who have doubts and do not believe the government's data. The Consultant Tricycle survey showed that as many as 45.2 percent of respondents believed the official number of positives, deaths, and recoveries due to COVID-19. In contrast, 43.5 percent of respondents doubt the data that has been published. The data was followed by respondents who did not believe (8.3 percent) and did not know/did not answer (3.1 percent). The National Survey "Public Views on Handling the COVID-19 Pandemic" was conducted on 7-17 May 2020. This research reached 1,200 respondents from 34 provinces.

4) Better regulation: Proper regulation is essential for fairness in providing services to the community (e.g., providing stimulus to people

affected by COVID-19). Regulation (Perppu) Number 1 of 2020 concerning 'State Financial Policy and Financial System Stability for Handling the Government officially issued the 2019 Corona Virus Disease Pandemic based on a legal umbrella to provide stimulus for the community. At least five things are in the spotlight of netizens, as follows:

a. Budget deficit

"Chapter 2 part 1 of this Perpu regulates budgeting and financing. According to the President, the Government anticipates the possibility of a state budget deficit of up to 5.07 percent so that it requires relaxation of the state budget deficit policy of above 3 percent. The relaxation of this deficit, the President continued, is only for 3 years, namely 2020, 2021, and 2022." (katadata.co.id)

b. Budget relocation

"Still in chapter 2, the Government is also authorized to shift the budget between organizational units, between functions, and/or



between programs. In addition, the Government can use a budget that is sourced from the Excess Budget (SAL), endowment funds and the accumulation of education endowments, funds controlled by the state with certain criteria, funds managed by the Public Service Agency; and/or funds originating from a reduction in State Equity Participation in SOEs. In his official statement, Jokowi decided that the total additional expenditure and financing for the 2020 State Budget for handling COVID-19 was IDR 405.1 trillion. The total budget will be allocated Rp 75 trillion for health spending, Rp 110 trillion for social protection, and Rp 70.1 trillion for tax incentives and the People's Business Credit stimulus. Then, Rp150 trillion will be used to finance the national economic recovery program, including credit restructuring as well as guarantees and financing for the business world, especially micro, small and medium enterprises." (katadata.co.id)

c. Tax policy

"For economic stimulus for MSMEs and business actors, it will be prioritized for the exemption of PPh 21 for workers in the manufacturing sector with a maximum income of IDR 200 million. In addition, the Government also exempts VAT on imports of raw materials for taxpayers. The Head of State also stated that the economic stimulus was also intended to accelerate VAT refunds in 19 certain sectors to maintain liquidity for business actors. To reduce the corporate income tax rate by 3 percent from 25 percent to 22 percent. As well as for the postponement of principal and interest payments for all KUR

schemes affected by COVID-19 for 6 months." (katadata.co.id)

d. New powers of BI, LPS and OJK

The implementation of the financial system stability policy, as referred to in Article 14 of this Perpu, the Financial System Stability Committee (KSSK), is given the authority to hold meetings through face - to - face or through the use of information technology. In addition, the KSSK can also establish a scheme for providing support by the Government for handling problems with financial service institutions and financial system stability that endanger the national economy. According to this Perpu, Bank Indonesia (BI), the Deposit Insurance Corporation (LPS), and the Financial Services Authority (OJK) have the authority set out in Chapter III regarding the Financial System Stability Policy in Articles 16 to 23. In essence, the Government and Bank Indonesia (BI) and the OJK Authority are optimizing the monetary policy mix and the financial sector to provide support and maintain stability to the national economy. BI has also expanded the underlying transactions for foreign investors and global and domestic custodian banks for investment activities. Regarding the role of OJK, the President said that the Financial Services Authority had issued several policies, namely waivers and delays in credit or leasing payments of up to Rp 10 billion, including for MSMEs and informal workers for a maximum of 1 year as well as providing relief and postponement of credit or leasing payments without a ceiling limit, following the debtor's ability to pay and agreed with the bank or leasing institution.

e. Cannot be sued later

Following Article 27 of this Perpu, the costs incurred by the government and KSSK member institutions are part of the economic costs to save the economy from the crisis and are not state losses. This article then created a polemic among the public, especially Internet residents who considered that this government regulation (Perppu) gave the government the right of immunity. The managed budget is more than Rp. 400 T, which is considered very large, and very prone to be misused. So that this article is considered by some Internet residents as a shield if one day there will be fraud or misuse of the COVID-19 handling budget stimulus in Indonesia.

f. Integrity and fairness.

Integrity is an important determinant of public trust and is essential to be recognized as a clean, fair, and open government.

g. Inclusive policy determination.

The public should be able to understand how the government's policies should be able to strengthen institutions and increase trust between government and society. In addition, the policies issued by the government should also involve the community or other community groups. This will ensure that the policies that the government issues will be effective and accepted by most people.

The government's public communications can also influence the public's trust. Several urgent problems can be identified from the need for effective management of public communications during the COVID-19 crisis. Effective public communication is at the

forefront of efforts to provide accurate information, and foster trust and a sense of security to the public during emergencies. The government must be an authoritative reference for information for the public during a situation that is full of uncertainty. The availability of reliable sources of information is increasingly crucial, given the increasingly unstoppable flow of information due to rapid advances in information technology. Information can spread quickly through social media, and this often leads to the confusion of accurate information with misleading misinformation. Based on a study conducted by PolGov UGM, assessed the types of misleading misinformations (Herlina, 2015; Prasetyo et al., 2020; Suhifatullah, 2020) follows:

1) Chaotic public communication in the middle of a crisis

This problem can create chaos in public information regarding the crisis, which will erode and even lose public confidence in the credibility of the government and create confusion in the community. This kind of public communication crisis will deepen the vulnerability of the community during the ongoing crisis. Furthermore, this condition also provides an opportunity for the growth of the infodemic, which can have a worse impact than the pandemic itself.

2) Society's failure to capture accurate information

The government's failure to manage effective public communications has resulted in the public losing the ability to understand issues accurately and reliably, which would significantly help them respond appropriately to the outbreak. Accurate information can be the basis on which people can act and respond better to a crisis. Meanwhile, misinformation can keep people away

from the right solution in responding to the outbreak and even worsen the situation. Misunderstanding the pattern of the spread of the virus, for example, can cause the community to play a role in spreading the virus. Likewise, information that is not comprehensive on funeral procedures for COVID-19 victims has resulted in excessive and inappropriate public reactions. The lack of clarity in the general information message conveyed by the government has caused the public to fail to understand the crisis problem properly.

3) Impeded policy implementation due to the weakness of public communication

Public communication is critical in the crisis policy process to ensure that policy messages are quickly and accurately captured by various relevant parties, both internally and externally. The government's inability to manage public communication related to the policies undertaken will impact, hamper and even lead to the failure to implement policies to manage the pandemic. Weak public communication in the context of this policy is indicated by the misalignment of statements between authorized public officials, which makes the policy implementation process difficult. Unclear information regarding whether or not a lockdown is necessary, whether or not going home is prohibited (for example) shows how the weakness of public communication can affect implementation.

4) No single platform for public information

Multiple sources of information developed at the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis, based on both regional and national information, and between institutions. In addition, there was no single reference to information

channels (e.g., in the form of an official website) that was prepared from the start by the government that contained various information related to COVID-19. The absence of reference information led some parties to take independent steps that were not entirely based on accurate data. Consequently, many of the actions taken by both local government and the public tended to be over-reactive, not well-targeted, and even irrelevant to the handling of COVID-19. This information crisis created side effects of the crisis that have not been easy to manage.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The results of the INDEF survey show that 66.28 percent of Indonesians have a negative response to communications made by the government. Public communication carried out by the government during the pandemic was still not effective, due to inconsistency and not being prepared to handle risks or crises. The results of the analysis of public perceptions and emotions regarding the handling of COVID-19 by the government compiled from digital footprints also showed that the main problem faced by the government was 'trust' or public trust in the government, through information provided to the public. Various policies carried out by the government, especially in dealing with pandemic problems, have also entered the public spotlight on social media. The partial lockdown that was implemented by the Indonesian government has drawn a lot of criticism from the public. For example, some people criticized the weak enforcement of the partial lockdown that was implemented by the

government. Some people even rejected the implementation of social restrictions, which are considered to have implications for the economy of the poor in Indonesia.

This rejection also occurred in various social media, especially on Twitter. The results of the social network analysis that we conducted from July 18, 2021 to July 24, 2021 showed that 22,704 tweets had negative sentiments or rejected the PPKM policy. The narrative of the rejection of PPKM and the demonstrations against PPKM were enlivened by two clusters, namely the Pro-opposition cluster and X Cluster. During that period, there were at least 11 hashtags whose narratives demanded Jokowi step down, such as #Jokowi7TahunCukupLah, #BapakPresidenMenyerahlah, #2021GantiPresiden, #JokowiStepDown, #MakzulkanPresidenGagal, #Lockdown Jokowi, and so on.

There were some supportive hashtags among the pro-Jokowi, but not many, such as #KitaPercayaJokowi, #RakyatBersamaJokowi, #JokowiAtasiPandemic.

Based on this conclusion, the Indonesian government is advised to be more transparent regarding the current conditions, especially during the ongoing COVID-19 crisis. In addition, the government is recommended to improve the pattern of public communication, which has been considered problematic and not synchronized between its officials. This discrepancy has led to confusion about the policies implemented by the government.

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