

Content Analysis of the Controversy Over the Communication of Government Policies in Handling Covid-19 in Online Media

Panji Dwi Ashrianto, Edwi Arief Sosiawan

Universitas Pembangunan Nasional Veteran Yogyakarta

Email address panjidwiasrianto@upnyk.ac.id, Email address edwias.edu@gmail.com

Abstract

The Coronavirus (Covid-19) has hit almost all countries in the world. Cases of Covid-19 sufferers continue to grow. The impacts are also multidimensional, from economic to social. It is not easy for governments to deal with this global spreading pandemic. During the Covid-19 epidemic, controversy arose in the public space regarding government discourse and policies in dealing with Corona and its effects. These various controversies occurred due to the inadequate public understanding of the policies for handling Covid 19. The government is considered stuttering in responding to the situation and shows a failure to deliver good communication to the public. The research problem's formulation is: What is the content of controversy and polemic over government policies in handling COVID-19 from March 2020 to May 2020 in online media. The research method used is quantitative with a content analysis approach. There are three policy contents analyzed, which are sourced from the three news media portals most accessed in Indonesia based on the Alexa website ranking. As a result, there are three main conclusions in this study. First, in communicating government policies, the president is still at the forefront of delivering systems. Second, the guidelines issued by the government are mostly macro policies dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic. Third, the impact resulting from government policies' communication on handling the Covid-19 epidemic has caused chiefly controversy.

Keywords: *Policy communication, Online Media, COVID-19*



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I. INTRODUCTION

Coronavirus is a virus that attacks humans, causing respiratory infections from mild to deadly stages. The coronavirus, known as COVID-19, has a level of danger almost the same as other deadly virus varieties, namely SARS and MERS. The coronavirus was actually discovered in humans in the 1960s (Kahn & McIntosh, 2005). Common signs of COVID-19 infection are similar to the common cold and include respiratory symptoms such as dry cough, fever, shortness of breath, and difficulty breathing. In more severe cases, the infection

can lead to pneumonia, acute respiratory syndrome, kidney failure, and death. The COVID-19 infection is spread from one person to another through droplets produced from an infected person's respiratory system, generally when coughing or sneezing. According to data, the time from exposure or incubation to the onset of symptoms is between two and 14 days.

The first coronavirus outbreak occurred in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China, in December 2019. Three months after the COVID-19 outbreak in Wuhan, China, the World Health Organization (WHO) officially declared a pandemic on March 11, 2020. Countries experiencing the largest number of cases are China, Iran, Italy, and the Republic of Korea. However, the United States ranks eighth, currently, with fewer than 2,000 confirmed cases. A positive case of COVID-19 in Indonesia was first detected on March 2, 2020, when two people were confirmed to be infected by a Japanese national. As of April 24, 2020, 8,211 positive cases of COVID-19 have been confirmed with 1,002 recovered cases and 689 cases of death (Dipna Videlia Putsanra, 2020). The COVID-19 incident in Indonesia was conveyed directly by President Ri Joko Widodo on March 2, 2020, which surprised various parties because previously, it was estimated that COVID-19 was relatively unlikely to infect Indonesia.

Since the first case of transmission of Japanese nationals to Indonesian citizens in Jakarta, the government has immediately taken steps to anticipate by issuing various policies such as social distances and physical distances, emphasizing that all learning and work activities should start at home (WFH). Besides, the system took as a recommendation for the public to avoid activities in the crowd, including in worship and carrying out rapid tests.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Although sharing policies that have taken are preventive and curative in handling COVID-19, several violations still occur in the community, such as several offices even asking their employees to continue working in offices or companies. Violations of several people under surveillance do not want to carry out quarantine, as well as a flight of suspected Covid-19 patients who have fled the hospital. For example, one case occurred because the patient wanted to go home first, indicating that the government's policies were still not taken seriously by some people.

Not only violations of government policies but several government policies have also caused polemics and controversy. Some of the disputes related to worship restrictions, especially in prayer, gather many people, causing religious leaders and religious community organizations to step into back-up—government policy. The next controversy is the proposal for the imposition of a civil emergency through a Government Regulation instead of Law (PERPPU) for violations of social distances, which changes with the enactment of Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB). The PSBB itself has also drawn controversy because it predicted that in the long term, it could slow down economic production activities and kill the economy of specific community groups such as online motorcycle taxi drivers, market traders, and restaurants. PSBB is also considered capable of reducing the production volume of imported goods to disrupt the level of activity and demand for the economy as a whole.

Not only does it stop there, but the controversy also arises because several Regional Heads who issue local policies deemed not coordinating and synergizing with central government policies that are feared of not optimal movements in preventing COVID-19. The final controversy is the policy of releasing prisoners who have entered the assimilation stage not to cause transmission and spread of COVID-19 in prisons (LAPAS). The polemic that occurs from this policy is because there are no facts that show prisoners are exposed to the coronavirus. Another polemic is the suspicion that the system will release suspects in corruption cases and protect influential corruptors' interests. Meanwhile, there was anxiety within the community due to fears of increasing crimes being repeated by prisoners. freed child and adult prisoners numbered between 30,000 and 35,000

These various controversies occurred due to the inadequate public understanding of the policies for handling Covid 19. The government is considered stuttering in responding to the situation and shows a failure to deliver good communication to the public. Related to the communication strategy for handling this pandemic situation, there have been a series of sporadic efforts or not integrated into the community. Governments often adopt overlapping policies that confuse the public.

Based on the facts and delivery that the controversy and polemic of government policies on the threat and spread of the coronavirus above become the basis for conducting research topics that will formulate the problem: "What is the content of controversy and polemic of government policies in handling COVID-19 during the period from March 2020 to May 2020 on online media? "

This research was appointed because it still has novelty values and is directly related to society's interests and situation. Besides that, research is also of practical value because it will benefit its results and is more oriented towards scientific facts and put aside political problems.

The purpose of this study is to determine the tendency of the content of controversies and polemics related to government policies in handling COVID 19

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

III.1. Public Policy Theory

Government policy or public policy results from intensive interaction between policy-making actors based on a phenomenon that must be found a solution. Alternatively, in practical language, public policy is the government's process of translating their political vision into programs and actions to produce the desired change results in the real world (Peters, 2015). Meanwhile, Ealau and Pewitt (Ealau & Pewitt, 1973) define policies as applicable regulations characterized by consistent and repetitive behavior either from those who make or implement the policy. In line with the previous understanding, according to Edi (Suharto, 2014), the policy is a provision that contains principles to direct a planned and consistent way of acting in achieving specific goals.

Public Policymaking itself can be characterized as a dynamic, complex, and interactive system. Public problems are identified and resolved by creating new public policies to reform old public policies. To produce public Policy, it involves three important elements, namely policy actors, public policy, and the policy environment (William N. Dunn, 2003). Meanwhile, the criteria for good public policy are based on; Identification of social order; Diagnosing problems, Identifying the right agency for an action, Providing consideration and assessment of policy options to be taken, Implementing and enforcing organizational change, and evaluating policies.

According to William Dunn in Winarno (Winarno, 2007), the stages in public Policymaking consist of five stages, namely Agenda setting / Agenda Formulation, Policy Formulation, Policy Adoption, Policy Implementation, and Policy Evaluation.

Public policy results generally consist of three types of public policies: Public Macro / general Policy; constitutes a fundamental policy and generally forms part of the binding ideology and legislation. Meso Public Policy; Medium-sized policies or better known as implementation explanations and Micro Public Policies, is a policy that regulates the implementation or implementation of public policies on it (S. & Tangkilisan, 2003).

II.2.Communication Policy

Communication is a publicly resolved policy, such as in hearings, debates, newspaper and magazine editorial pages, radio, and talk shows. Communication is a subject of public policy, especially in the laws and regulations conveyed in speeches, mass media, and telecommunications. On the other hand, communication is an object of policy, as witnessed by the government and non-governmental organizations' efforts to provide information and educate various publics about problems in society.

Emphasis on the importance of communication with the public policy stated by Irish (Young, 2002), that organizing and public involvement can be done when people communicate with themselves about their needs, problems, and creative ideas to solve their problems. Democratic public legitimacy and public policy generally depend on sensitivity in the communication process carried out by state institutions. The moral strength of the communication process and its relationship to public policy requires that both be inclusive. Information that is useful in the public policy process has four main characteristics: helping solve problems is action-oriented, has consequences, and is publicly accessible (Robert T. Craig, 2000).

Apart from having the four characteristics mentioned above, public policy communication must make information understandable in a particular context in public policy communication. The context referred to here means that a two-way transaction that is carried out between the government's framework and its political environment must be able to synergize and the community uses shared expectations to produce and interpret information effectively. The presenter, in this case, the government and the recipient of the information, is that the public must share knowledge about expectations if the policy document (or policy

talks) is to achieve its objectives. Public policy communication has the principle that the information conveyed can be useful and oriented not on how much is known by the government, but on how much is known by the public (Fisher, 1984).

Related to public policy communication, this is part of government communication, which has several principle concepts in its implementation, namely; Communication rights, recognized, government communication is about policy and organization, active communication, and communication reflects the policy phase (Vincent Price, 1992).

IV. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

This research's object is the government policy news for handling COVID-19, which has been circulating on online media from March 2020 to May 2020. The reason for choosing the periodization is because that month is the starting point for the COVID-19 Pandemic in Indonesia and its estimated stability. Handling COVID-19 by the government through policies that have been implemented. According to the Alexa ranking site, the selected online media were the three most accessed news portals: Kompas.com, CNN Indonesia, and Kumparan. There are three policy issues analyzed during this period, namely the Perppu corona, a Government Regulation instead of Law (Perppu) Number 1 of 2020 concerning "State Financial Policy and Financial System Stability for Handling the COVID-19 Pandemic, the implementation of PSBB and prohibition of going home.

This study uses quantitative methods with content analysis techniques, which are scientific analysis of the content of communication messages, which includes (1) sign classification, (2) using criteria as the basis for classification, (3) using specific analytical techniques as predictors (Setiawan, 1989).

Quantitative content analysis has different characteristics and research steps from other quantitative research. The steps of content analysis research determine the concept, what you want to see, and research. After that, the researchers determined the technique. Processes and procedures in measuring the concept that you want to see empirically (operationalization). This concept is later derived into units that can be seen and observed empirically (Eriyanto, 2011).

A total of 604 news related to 3 policy issues for handling Covid 19 were taken from March to May 2020 from 3 online media. The news was further investigated using the analysis unit and the categories which have been prepared as indicated in the table:

Table 1. Units Of Analysis And Categorization

NO	ANALYSIS UNIT	CATEGORIZATION
1.	Type of policy submitted	1. Macro public policy 2. Meso public policy 3. Micro public policy
2.	Contents Message Policies	1. Prevention 2. Handling

		3. Follow up
3.	Policy Administer	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. President 2. Minister 3. The president's spokesman 4. Institutions appointed by the government 5. Governor 6. Regent/mayor
4.	Types Of Communication Policy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Active communication 2. Communication of the policy phase
5.	Policy impact	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Controversy 2. Discourse

IV.1. Type of Policy

The content analysis carried out on government policies in handling COVID-19 covers three significant issues from March to May: the initial period of the spread of the COVID-19 outbreak in Indonesia. Since the first case was announced, the Indonesian Government has tried to prepare various steps and policies to deal with and prevent the spread of Covid-19 from spreading.

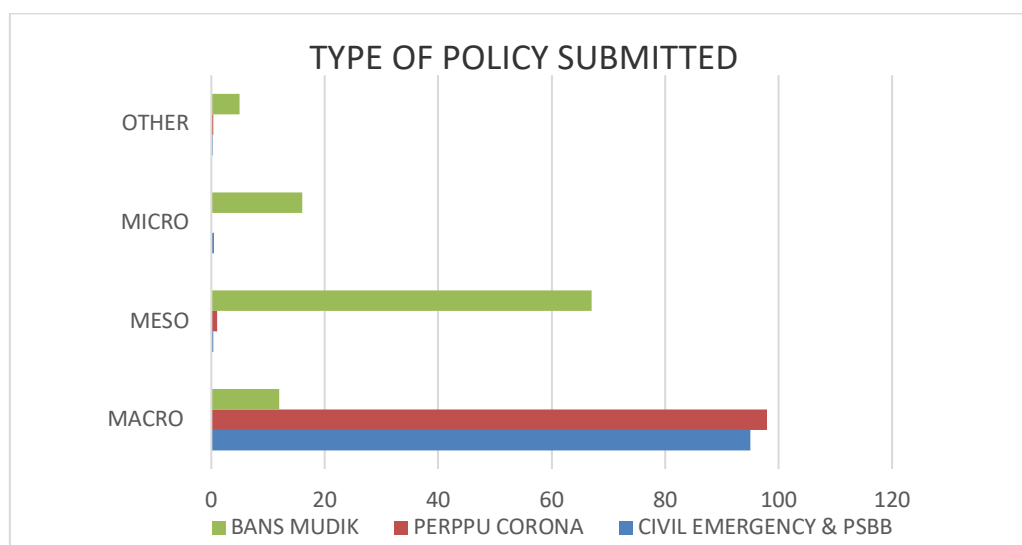


Figure 1. Types of policies submitted

In the analysis unit of the types of policies presented, it can be seen that the policies regarding the Coronavirus Perppu and the determination of civil emergency and the PSBB are more macro in nature because they are related to the hierarchy of statutory regulations as regulated in Law Number 10 of 2004 (Nugroho, 2009). Whereas in the homecoming prohibition, the types of policies delivered are more meso in nature. The policies that prohibit going home are more of an appeal issued by the relevant ministries and regional heads.

IV.2. Contents Message Policies

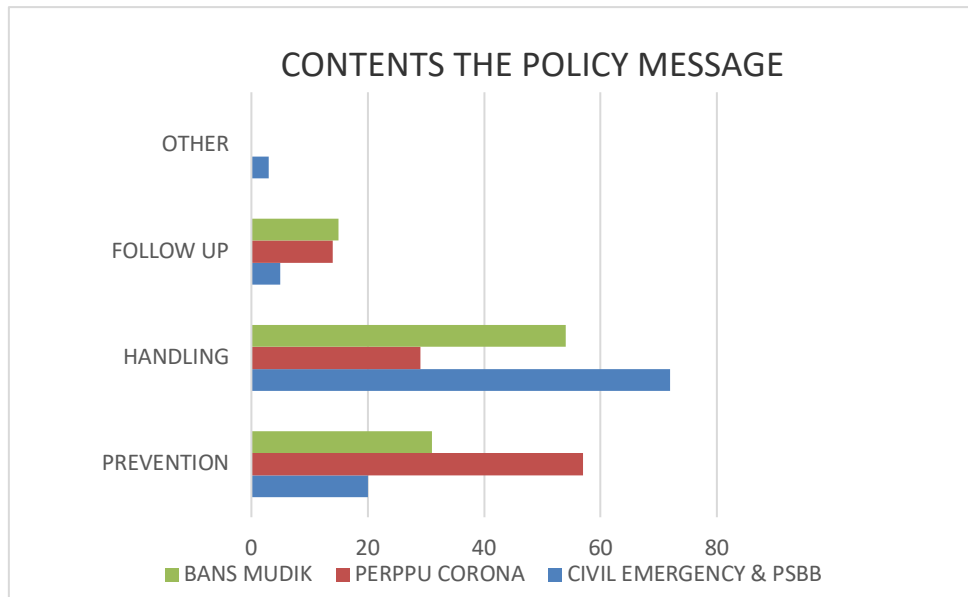


Figure 2. Contents Message Policies

In the Contents Message Policies unit analysis, the corona Perppu is a government policy issued to prevent and anticipate the threat of COVID-19, which endangers the National Economic and or Financial System Stability. Its impact can be mitigated or minimized. Policies related to handling COVID-19 are often found in reporting on the implementation of the civil emergency or PSBB and the ban on going home. This policy appeared in March when the government announced COVID-19 as a national disaster by emphasizing the social distancing aspect and May when entering Ramadan.

IV.3. Policy Administer

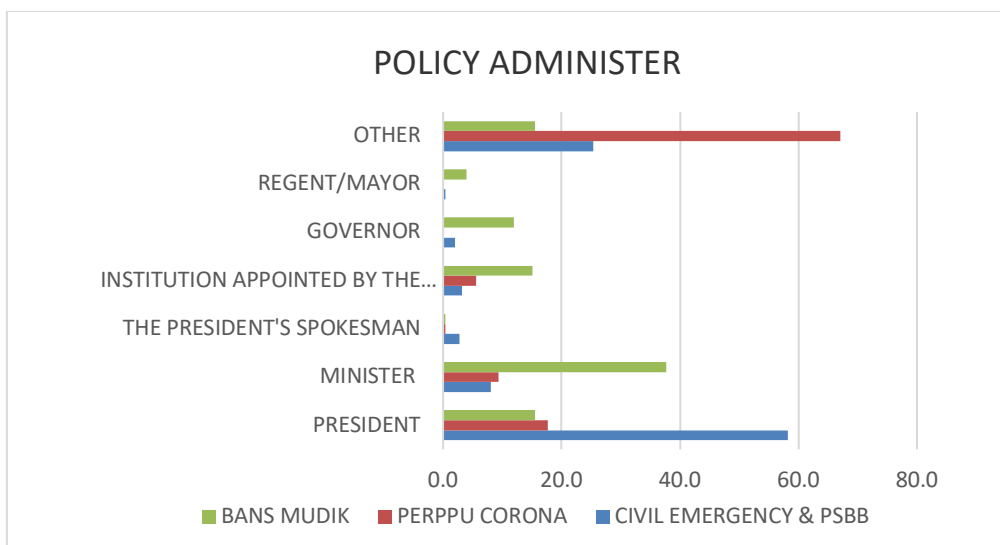


Figure 3. Policy Administer

Figure 3 shows that the most dominant speaker for policy delivery was the President, especially on the issues of civil emergency and the PSBB. They followed by the minister's submission of policies on the issue of prohibiting going home. Whereas in the corona perppu policy, many other parties were conveyed, including members of the people's representative council. This data shows that the President is still at the forefront of delivering government policies to the public, especially in strategic policies.

The policy that was most highlighted by the President was the implementation of a civil emergency to be combined with a public health emergency in the form of large-scale social restrictions (PSBB) where this policy generated polemic in the community. The President is the highest authority in implementing the central civil emergency status. In practice, the President is assisted by ministers, the TNI chief of staff, and the police chief.

However, the communication that the President tried to establish at the start of the pandemic also caused controversy, as a result of being out of sync with the officials below him. On various occasions, officials from both ministers, BNPB Head and President Jokowi himself, often conveyed different information. Each other corrects and causes the community to be confused.

IV.4. Types Of Communication Policy

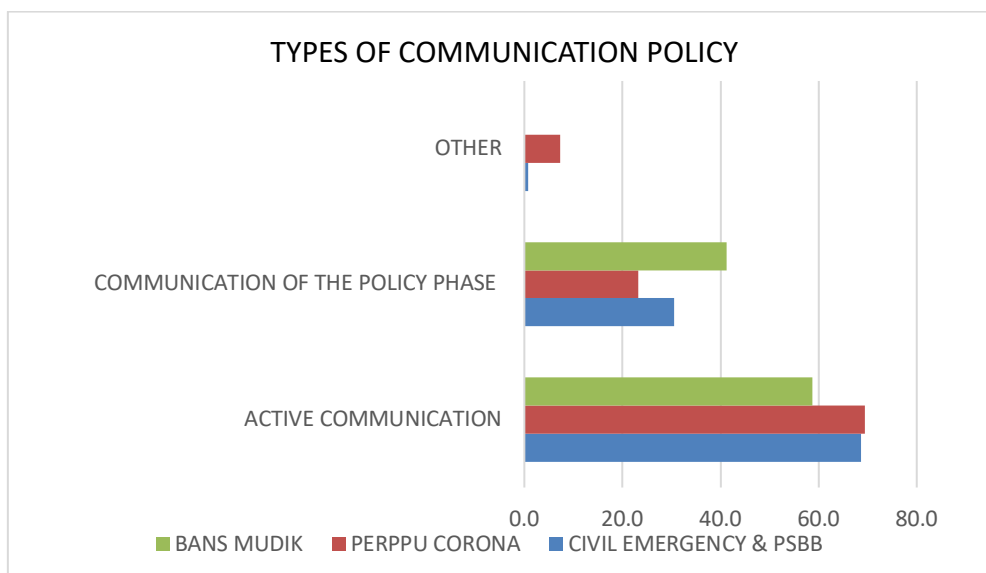


Figure 4. Types Of Communication Policy

Most communication policy is carried out through active communication methods, especially on the Corona Perppu and civil emergency & PSBB. Meanwhile, communication on the policy phase was mostly carried out on the issue of prohibiting going home. Active

communication was carried out in explaining several government efforts to anticipate the spread of the coronavirus in the country. Active communication is quite intensively carried out by the government, for example, in the discourse of the issuance of Perppu No.1 of 2020 concerning "State Financial Policy and Financial System Stability for Handling the COVID-19 Pandemic, in which the government is actively explaining the direction and purpose of issuing the Perppu.

IV.5. Policy Impact

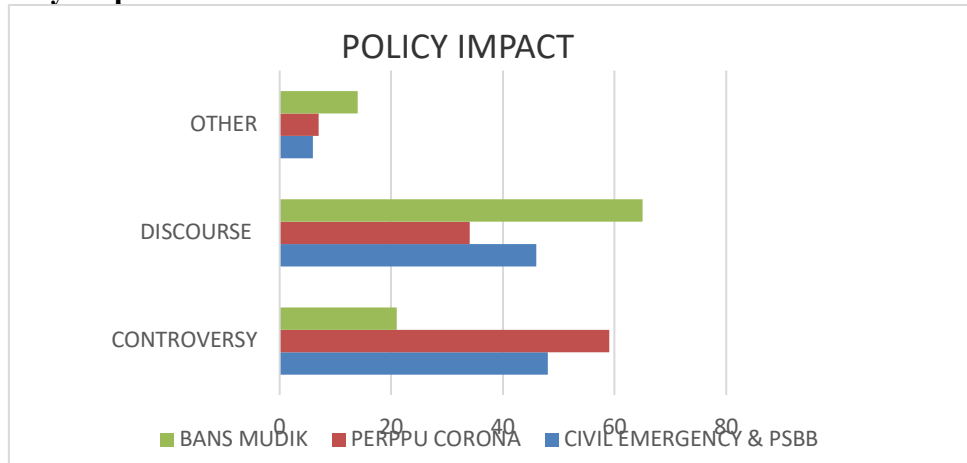


Figure 5. Policy Impact

Policy impact. The policy to prohibit going home has produced the most discourses in the community. Discourses that arise due to the prohibition of going home include encouraging the issuance of a fatwa on haram going home by the MUI, imposing fines and sanctions for homecoming offenders, and restrictions on transportation. Meanwhile, the Perppu Corona has generated the most controversy in society. Perppu Number 1 of 2020 concerning "State Financial Policy and Financial System Stability for Handling the COVID-19 Pandemic has reaped many pros and cons. The Perppu has reaped claims from many parties, both from public figures and community organizations. filed by Amien Rais and Din Syamsudin but ultimately failed in court.

Of the three media studied, namely Kompas.com, CNN, and Kumparan on three issues (Corona perppu, Civil Emergency, and PSBB, as well as the ban on going home, the most dominating the news during the period March to May 2020 were the issue of the Perppu Corona and Civil Emergency.

V. CONCLUSION AND FURTHER RESEARCH

There are three significant findings in this study. First, in communicating government policies, the president is still at the forefront of delivering policies. Second, the policies issued by the government are mostly macro policies that deal with the COVID-19 pandemic. Third, the impact resulting from government policies on handling the Covid-19 pandemic has mainly caused controversy.

From the results of this study, this research is still very open to being developed by measuring government communication effectiveness on handling the Covid-19 pandemic. It can be found the strengths and weaknesses of the communication that the government has made.

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