

## **Infodemic During Covid 19 in Village Communities**

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### **Abstract**

While still having to fight against the pandemic, Indonesia is also still experiencing the problem of disinformation known as an infodemic. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), an infodemic is excessive information about Covid-19 online or offline. The period of Covid 19 made people fear, anxious and less trust in the government due to excessive information about Covid 19. Conspiracy theories are theories that try to explain the plans or facts of the crime that actually happened behind an event, in this case there is too much information about Covid 19 in mass media and social media can make people lose trust and can even increase anxiety. The purpose of this study was to find out how infodemic was during the Covid 19 pandemic in the people of Sea Village, Kec. Pineleng Regency Minahasa. Population and informant qualitative methods; General public, community leaders/fathers/mothers/youth/teenagers/elderly; focus: information conspiracy of the covid 19 pandemic from the aspect of anxiety and trust. This study found anxiety (comorbidities; stress; panic) and beliefs (only information from the government) about Covid 19 in the people of Sea Village, Kec. Pineleng Regency Minahasa in order to create harmonization of the social life of society and the environment.

**Keywords:** *Infodemic, Covid-19, Public*

### **Introduction**

While still having to fight against the pandemic, Indonesia is also still experiencing the problem of disinformation known as an infodemic. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), an infodemic is excessive information about Covid-19 online or offline. According to Gillard et al. (2021) the resulting impact is endangering physical and mental health, increasing stigma against Covid-19 and its survivors, thus impacting people's compliance with the health system. The Corona virus is a pandemic that is in an era of massive use of technology and social media, which have become a reference point for finding information and staying connected to one another (Saputra et al., 2021). However, the spread of information that is so fast and uncontrollable can actually slow down the handling of Covid-19.

The "infodemic" phenomenon. As the name implies, this term is a combination of "information" and "epidemic". This term is not yet included in the Big Indonesian Dictionary, but in English, "infodemic" is defined as, "A surfeit of information about a problem that is viewed as being a detriment to its solution or "a flood of information about a problem that can actually obscure solution to the problem."

The widespread spread of the Covid 19 virus has caused social change, people are required to be able and accustomed to changes occurring in ways of communicating, ways of thinking, and ways of behaving. In fact, this social change due to the COVID-19 pandemic is in line with the development of communication technology through digitization, which without us realizing it has already made it happen. Infodemic is a negative phenomenon that needs to be addressed wisely by every member of the community, including those in Sea Village, Minahasa Regency.

Based on this phenomenon, this study aims to find out how infodemic was during the Covid 19 pandemic in the people of Sea Village, Kec. Pineleng Regency Minahasa. Research Benefit: Discovering the conspiracy of the covid 19 infodemic from the aspect of anxiety and belief in the people of Sea Village, Kec. Pineleng, Kab. Minahasa, as well as creating harmonization of the social life of the community and the environment in accordance with the Strategic Plan of Sam Ratulangi University in the field of excellence in social humanities and arts and culture.

### **Literature Review**

In the midst of the spread of the virus that has become a pandemic, the term infodemic appears. According to Wikipedia, infomic is a combination of two words, namely information and epidemic which refers to something that moves very quickly and spreads quite widely regarding things that are accurate and inaccurate. such as information about a particular disease. This definition is also in line with WHO which states that an infodemic is a deliberate attempt to spread misinformation to undermine the public health response and advance alternative or individual agendas.

Misinformation about Covid 19, for example stating that Covid 19 is part of a world conspiracy or that Covid 19 doesn't actually exist, often appears during a pandemic like today (Grimes, 2021). These are the things that make people ignorant and don't care about the dangers of the virus. If left unchecked, this infodemic will of course hinder the government's efforts to deal with the virus apart from causing casualties, of course. Moreover, every government in the world is competing to carry out mass vaccinations along with the existence of several vaccines that are considered capable of preventing Covid 19 widely, because infodemic is a really dangerous thing and can hinder the proper handling of the virus. global political, corporate, and scientific communities to enhance the integrity and credibility of professional experts and rebuild public trust.

During the Covid 19 pandemic, society experienced changes that forced conditions and situations to change. So that people live with their own lives and keep their distance from other humans (social distancing). In a social environment, there will definitely be social interaction whether it is carried out by groups or individuals with other individuals (Horton & Richard Wohl, 1956). When the relationship is well established in a social environment, it will facilitate common goals. But the presence of a pandemic has made society experience many changes. An overview of the changes in social interaction that occurred during the Covid-19 pandemic, such as maintaining a healthy body starting from diet, regular exercise, diligently washing hands after traveling and wearing masks while traveling, this is a way for us to avoid Covid-19 or any disease, related also in technological changes that are so rapid that any information can be directly received by the public.

We all hope that the pandemic will soon pass and we can return to our normal activities. It cannot be denied that the spread of the Covid virus has seen its impact on people's attitudes which have become more curious about the environment they live in. Public concern about the Covid 19 outbreak has had an impact on everyone's social attitudes, especially towards the process of social interaction carried out by everyone, and information overload, Nila Sari Lubis (Kompasiana.com with the title "Process of Social Interaction During the Covid 19 Pandemic").

Conspiracy is a conspiracy of a group of people which in planning a crime that is carried out neatly and is kept secret, the perpetrators of the conspiracy are called conspirators (Keeley, 2019). The conspiracy is done so smoothly and neatly that people don't know anything about it, this makes it difficult to prove the conspiracy (Uscinski, 2018). People may only be able to guess and surmise what will happen next, hence the conspiracy theory. A conspiracy is a theory that tries to explain the plans or facts of the crime that actually happened behind an event (Bush, 2009). All purposes of conspiracy certainly vary according to the interests and goals to be achieved by groups or people in power. In general, conspiracies are made to blame a party or to make an excuse.

The term disinfodemic was raised by UNESCO to provide an appropriate term for disinformation that is spread intentionally during a pandemic. UNESCO notes that there are nine main themes of dysinfodemics that are spread throughout the world. First, the origin and spread of COVID-19, giving rise to various conspiracy theories about COVID-19. Second, the COVID-19 statistics regarding positive cases and deaths are fake and misleading. Third, the economic impact is exaggerated. Fourth, efforts to discredit journalists and various media reporting on the pandemic. Fifth, medical science information that is misleading regarding the symptoms, diagnosis, and how to treat COVID-19. Sixth, misleading information about the impact of the pandemic on society and the environment, such as the issue of lockdown and all its consequences. Seventh, the politicization of the pandemic by people who have both power and interests. Eighth, the emergence of various content designed to commit financial fraud online. Ninth, disinformation about public figures diagnosed with the COVID-19 virus.

These nine types of dysinfodemics are fatal if people believe them compared to misinfodemic and malinfodemic. Why? This is because a dysinfodemic can put a person's life in danger both physically and mentally. As an illustration, if information about COVID-19 is not dangerous, then people who believe this information will not follow health protocols. He will refuse to use a mask, don't want to wash his hands frequently, and is reluctant to keep his distance from other people. According to Robinson et al. (2020) under such conditions, if his body is exposed to the COVID-19 virus, then he is risking the lives of other people, both himself and others. Apart from being fatal to physical health, the attitude of people who do not think that COVID-19 needs to be treated with certain health protocols will certainly raise a sense of anxiety for those around them who have high discipline in taking care of themselves during a pandemic. So, like a pandemic, a dysinfodemic is just as dangerous.

In relation to the research problem, we want to know about how the infodemic hit the people of Sea Village, Pineleng District, Kab. Minahasa, and how the community responds to this information from the aspect of trust and anxiety about covid-19 information. Previous research on the Communication Strategy of Coastal Women in Innovation During the Covid-19 Pandemic

in Manado City (2020); Coastal Women's Communication Strategy in Innovating During the Covid 19 Pandemic in Manado City (2021).

## **Methods**

This research method uses qualitative methods with in-depth interviews with several sources and direct observations in the community. The qualitative method is used by taking into account the suitability of the object under study and the scientific study concerned, in fact, everything is done in order to find the infodemic phenomenon during the Covid 19 era based on the results of data from the community. in Sea Village, Kec. Pineleng, Kab. Minahasa to find out about conspiracies in the infodemic that occurred during the Covid 19 era using qualitative methods, namely requesting information from sources who are competent with research problems then interpreted by researchers into research subjects. The focus in this research is; inspiration from information during a pandemic from the aspects of: Anxiety and belief in infodemic times of covid 19. The population of this study is the village community of Sea Kec. Pineleng Regency Minahasa While the research subjects of the target population are determined based on all the elements contained in the population. From here the subject will be selected by purposive sampling according to the need to obtain in-depth information. The subjects of this research are the government, parents/elderly and youth/adolescents.

## **Results and Discussion**

Sea Village is located in the Pineleng Region, Minahasa Regency, North Sulawesi Province. As the settlement and population grew in 2011 it developed into 8 guards, and some of the people worked as civil servants, private sector, self-employed as well as rice, tomato, corn, coconut, banana and stone digger farmers. there are also members of the community who have used digital media to open digital stalls selling cooked food, major vegetables, spices, raw fish, water depots and other businesses. The population of Sea Village as of April 2021 is 2028 people with 1063 men and 965 women with a total of 596 household heads (Village Data Source).

The outbreak of the COVID-19 outbreak was accompanied from the start by another phenomenon known as an infodemic. The term infodemic refers to an outbreak in the form of false and misleading information about COVID-19 (Pulido et al., 2020). Mediodecci Lustarini, Associate Expert Legal Analyst at the Directorate General of IKP of the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology, explained that an infodemic is an outbreak of information overflowing both online and offline, including deliberate efforts to spread misinformation so as to weaken public health responses and advance alternative agendas of groups or individuals. Hoax information related to COVID-19 is also very dangerous. It can even result in someone losing their family or relatives because they believe the hoax news. "This is the problem, it weakens our response to health," said Mediodecci Lustarini in a Public Discussion Forum webinar entitled "Fighting Hoaxes in a Pandemic Period" on Friday (13/8/2021). According to him, collaboration of all parties is needed to dealing with hoaxes. Prevention efforts include law enforcement, involving platforms, educating the public, cooperation between organizations and institutions, and providing information directed from upstream to downstream by the authorities. Another feature of hoax news is phishing or spam. Phishing disinformation is usually accompanied by a link as if it were an official website, even though the content is different if we click on the link.

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Likewise, what happened to the people of Sea Village, at first they really followed all the information and believed in all the news in the mass media and digital social media about Covid 19, which eventually caused excessive anxiety, but over time they began to be able to sort out news that could be trusted and especially if you want to get vaccinated against Covid 19.

According to Dr. Jiemi this problem arose due to a sudden change in the system due to the outbreak of the corona virus so that people had to adapt suddenly to changing patterns, namely from normal conditions to anxiety. "Anxiety is the result of ignorance in dealing with something new (coronavirus)." Furthermore, he said this anxiety was the result of social isolation, lack of interaction, limited physical movement, and changing stressor patterns. "If these emotions take over thoughts, feelings and behavior to the point where you feel suffering and are unable to perform daily functions, then maybe it could be a sign of a mental disorder and you need help," he said.

in research in the Sea village community, initially affected by Covid 19 feelings of anxiety with co-morbidities which according to the news could be fatal and even death if exposed to the covid 19 virus, so that fear and confusion haunted the community, but over time there was saturation with news of covid 19, and now I can accept the situation and start to rearrange life to a normal life that is adjusted to the current situation.

dr. Y. Santi Roestiyani stated: "There is a lot of information about the corona virus, which has both positive and negative impacts. We are indeed obliged to follow the information as an effort to remain alert." However, he said, if exposed to this information continuously, it will have an impact on mental health. This triggers stress, anxiety, panic, and fear. Second, avoid exposure which triggers anxiety."Keeping your distance from information is important. If you are already tired of information, then try to stop for a few days," said Ida.

### **Belief in the infodemic period of Covid 19**

From the results of research on the people of Sea Village, at this time the public's trust in the government regarding Covid-19 information still trusts the source of it from the government. This is also supported by the results of the Indonesian Political Indicator survey released last September 2020, public trust in President Jokowi in dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic problem is at 60%. This shows that people still have hope for the government in dealing with this pandemic. However, the number of confidence levels can decrease at any time. Where, one of the causes is the saturation of society. This boredom can arise due to repeated actions, lack of enthusiasm, and fatigue waiting (Harris, 2000). If you look at the reality of the pandemic in 2021, it's no exaggeration if I say that people are getting fed up with the current conditions.

According to the data obtained, the people are already a bit fed up with the news of Covid 19 and the current situation, they must continue to live and make a living with household economic costs that must be fulfilled by working, for this to start activities in earning a living such as going to the farm, daily labor and opening a digital shop by selling food, drinks, snacks and more.

## This happened for several reasons

First, starting from the level of public fear that has started to decrease, as evidence that some people are violating health protocols even though there have been strict measures from the government. Second, because ammunition (savings and income) began to decline, automatically the absorption capacity of state spending also decreased.

According to data from the Central Bureau of Statistics, the economy in Indonesia is experiencing a recession; economic growth was minus 5.32% in the second quarter, and minus 3.49% in the third quarter-2020. Third, the government is not solid in overseeing policies. Even though the information media is wide open, the solidity of the government is also a consideration for the public to put their trust in policy makers.

Fourth, policies during the pandemic have caused a lot of controversy, for example recently there have been pros and cons of vaccination. Fifth, the inability of state media to counter the growing issue of hoaxes. Sixth, the government's political steps seem to lack focus on the needs of society during a pandemic, such as the ratification of the Job Creation Law, the Corruption Eradication Commission Law, the dissolution of the FPI, and so on. Thus, causing the effect of demonstrations and crowds. Seventh, the dominance of information on the spread of Covid-19 which may no longer be relevant on social media even though the number of cases of Covid-19 has increased. Eighth, the boredom of people staying at home.

## Conclusion

Discovering a conspiracy of information about the Covid 19 pandemic resulted in anxiety, namely the feeling that arises when people get a lot of information about Covid 19 both about victims, alternative ways of healing; with herbal ingredients; negative information about the covid 19 vaccine, and other information that is not clear on the truth (hoax). Trust, namely information about Covid 19 originating from social media, was initially trusted, but over time, they trusted more information about Covid 19 from the mass media (television and official printed newspapers) social media with the official government website compared to other sites.

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