

21. PUBLIC COMMUNICATION MODEL OF THE SIDOARJO REGENCY GOVERNMENT IN FACING THE NEW NORMAL COVID-19

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PUBLIC COMMUNICATION MODEL OF THE SIDOARJO REGENCY GOVERNMENT IN FACING THE NEW NORMAL COVID-19

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Abstract

Keywords:

*Covid-19;
Crisis And
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(CERC); public
communication;
social media*

Changing the policy from Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB) to the “new normal” policy during the Covid-19 pandemic requires effective and targeted public communication. Therefore, this study aims to analyze and describe the implementation of the Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication (CERC) model in the public communication of the Sidoarjo Regency government during the new normal period in the Covid-19 pandemic. The method used in this research is a qualitative study, with data sources from interviews analyzed using the CERC model. The results showed that the Sidoarjo Regency government's public communication was mainly done through social media, websites, and outdoor-indoor publications in the form of banners. However, this public communication model is not by the needs of the heterogeneous Sidoarjo community, especially with the unequal distribution of media literacy. Thus, the necessary public communication is through community participation with two-way communication channels, persuasive interpersonal communication, as well as group and organizational communication, in accordance with the CERC model.

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Abstrak

Kata kunci:

Covid-19;
*Crisis And
Emergency Risk
Communication*
(CERC); komunikasi
publik; media
sosial

Adanya perubahan kebijakan dari Pembatasan Sosial Berskala Besar (PSBB) menuju ke kebijakan *new normal* saat pandemi Covid-19, membutuhkan komunikasi publik yang efektif serta tepat sasaran. Maka dari itu, studi ini bertujuan menganalisis dan mendeskripsikan implementasi model *Crisis And Emergency Risk Communication* (CERC) dalam komunikasi publik pemerintah Kabupaten Sidoarjo pada masa *new normal* saat pandemi Covid-19. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah studi kualitatif, dengan sumber data dari hasil wawancara yang dianalisis dengan model CERC. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan komunikasi publik pemerintah Kabupaten Sidoarjo sebagian besar dilakukan melalui media sosial, website, dan media publikasi luar-dalam ruangan dalam bentuk spanduk. Namun demikian, model komunikasi publik ini belum sesuai dengan kebutuhan dari masyarakat Sidoarjo yang bersifat heterogen, terlebih dengan literasi media yang belum merata. Dengan demikian, komunikasi publik yang diperlukan adalah melalui adanya partisipasi masyarakat dengan saluran komunikasi dua arah, komunikasi interpersonal persuasif, serta komunikasi kelompok dan organisasi yang sesuai dengan model CERC.

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INTRODUCTION

This study analyzes and describes the public communication of the Sidoarjo Regency government in entering the New Normal period due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The change in policy from the large-scale social restriction period (PSBB), according to the Decree of the

Minister of Health of the Republic of Indonesia Number HK.01.07/MENKES/264/2020, to the New Normal policy (new habits) in Sidoarjo Regent Regulation Number 44 of 2020, has not been able to reduce the number people infected with Covid-19. On the other hand, the number of infected increases. This indicates that the implementation of the New Normal period must be carried out extra carefully and measured. When this research was conducted on November 24, 2020, the number of positive cases of Covid-19 in Sidoarjo Regency was 7477, 6905 recovered, and 487 died (*Pusat Informasi Dan Komunikasi Covid-19 Kabupaten Sidoarjo*, 2020). Sidoarjo Regency is one of the areas with the highest positive cases of Covid-19 in East Java. Therefore, the district government needs good public communication for socialization and education regarding the implementation of the New Normal.

Learning from the failure of public communication by the government's official when this pandemic had just spread in Indonesia. The public was confused because the official seemed to simplify the problem (Sujoko, 2020). Some statements stated by public officials believe that Indonesia will be immune from the Covid-19 with various arguments that are not based on knowledge and science. The anti-science statements shown by policymakers and confusing information are indications of public doubts about the state's capacity to manage crises (Widaningrum & Mas'udi, 2020). The government's communications contain more hopes than messages that contain honesty and truth (Patrianti, 2020). According to the World Health Organization (WHO), good communication can help manage individual expectations and fears of an epidemic, as people will follow government instructions in times of a pandemic. Conversely, bad communication can break the public trust, reduce the government's credibility, and have a fatal impact on handling a pandemic like Covid-19.

Referring to the explanation above, each region or country approaches and understands the pandemic differently in order to develop systematic policies. This attempt is based on a scientific diagnosis and an alternative evaluation procedure to foster consensus during the lengthy process of establishing policy. The Covid-19 pandemic has finally become a worldwide concern, allowing for collaborative solutions and information to be used in policy formulation initiatives. The idea of selecting a region's policies will eventually affect every facet of the field and institution (Weng, Ni, Ho, & Ruo-Xi, 2020). The social and economic disruption brought about by the epidemic is a case in point. In actuality, not all of the country's public sectors can activate contingency plans in response to this. Thus, cross-sector collaboration is required to promote public innovation, develop governance measures, and be agile and adaptive in addressing pandemic concerns (Ansell, Sørensen, & Torfing, 2020).

Defining the term “sustainability” communication is a process that involves a variety of stakeholders in a variety of circumstances, that is, individuals that may be at odds with one another (Hariyanto, Utomo, & Dharma, 2020). Public communication success is not just driven by the volume of enormous government communication messages, as some earlier research findings indicated. Public communication will be more effective if it takes into account the educational level, location, psychology, and surroundings, as well as the networks and communication patterns used. The peculiarity of this research is that it demonstrates that interpersonal communication via opinion leaders and small group communication in catastrophe situations such as Covid-19 is more relaxing and effective at changing people's behavior to comply with health protocols. The downside is that it takes longer, and opinion leaders' communication skills are dependent on the communicant at hand. This methodology has the potential to reduce the Covid-19 communication mix, namely hoaxes, which can generate public misunderstanding and worry.

The research conducted by Rumengan, Ruru, & Londa (2021) indicates that the Covid-19 pandemic has decimated public venues that served as a direct conduit for public dialogue. The reason for this is that public space is a hub of mass mobility and, hence, can become a new cluster for Covid-19 dissemination. As a result, a new model must be developed that can effectively replace the medium to increase public communication effectiveness.

Another discussion regarding the importance of effective public communication strategy to deal with the pandemic was also presented by Ataguba & Ataguba (2020), that the process of effective communication is felt to play a role in the implementation of Social Determinants of Health (SDH). The existence of policies regarding social distancing restrictions, recommendations for good hygiene, avoiding crowds, and so on, are used as promotions to prevent and reduce the level of Covid-19 infection significantly. Especially in crisis communication and risk management, many developing countries have adopted effective communication systems and strategies to build trust, credibility, honesty, transparency, and accountability. This is adjusted to the important consideration of the uniqueness of several developing countries, both in the regional context, culture, language, and ethnic diversity that they have.

According to Reynold & Seeger (2005), the government should distinguish between Risk Communication and Crisis Communication. Risk communication explains how the public knows about negative consequences and can be minimized. Using persuasive forms of communication to win hearts and emotions is done frequently and continuously. The effectiveness of the message is very dependent on the sender of the message and the message itself therefore, communicators need scientists and technical experts who are competent in risk communication. While crisis communication is only informative to provide knowledge and awareness, it is irregular. Depending on the public and the developing situation, an authority figure plays an important role.

Communication done by the central government and local governments is also not harmonious. In the research of Putra & Handoko (2021), it is stated that this disharmony can be seen from the differences in the implementation of the policy of restricting community mobility which is applied in each region, giving rise to various public perceptions of the restriction policy.

The failure to manage communication caused the public not to understand information accurately, significantly to help respond to the epidemic appropriately. Even though accurate news should be the key in conveying messages quickly and accurately captured by various parties, it would cause misunderstandings and over-reactivity that are not relevant to the handling of Covid-19 and even worsen the situation. Such as incomplete information regarding funeral procedures for Covid-19 victims, the deadline for Covid-19 test results, Covid-19 patient financing, disclosure of information related to positive patients, and the terms used in the Covid-19 pandemic are constantly changing.

As a result, people trust more in other sources of information from the internet, especially from social media, which adds to the confusion with a large amount of hoax (fake) news (Syaipudin, 2020). From March to May 2020 was the most misinformation of Covid-19 found. It is mostly distributed through the platforms Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp. The most widely spread content is misleading content, fake content, and wrong content (Yustitia & Ashrianto, 2020).

The world health organization (WHO) has provided an early warning system in risk communication to all countries, including Indonesia, to communicate public during this pandemic to reduce distrust of the government. The communication built during this pandemic should build public strength as partners in preventing, promoting detention, and building resilience and healing (Vaughan & Tinker, 2009). The aim is that the message conveyed is clear and concise about the events and risks related to the affected community or group (Krimsky, 2007).

Table 1.

National Capacities Review Tool For Covid-19 (Source: WHO, 2020)

| Detection | Response |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| National Laboratory System 1. | Command and Coordination |
| Surveillance and Risk Assessment 1. | Risk Communication |
| Rapid Response Team (RRT | Point of Entry Case Management Infection Prevention & Control Logistics Procurement & Supply Management |

Building awareness of Sidoarjo people is certainly not an easy problem, even though Covid-19 is real, many Sidoarjo people are skeptical of suggestions and appeals regarding efforts to avoid the spread of Covid-19. Some people in Sidoarjo still think that death is a destiny that cannot be avoided without or because of Covid-19. This opinion is certainly not the wrong thing. Still, when the spread of Covid-19 is understood superficially, it will have fatal consequences if measured by the epidemiological process of the transmission of the Covid-19 pandemic. Another view that has developed in the Sidoarjo community is related to meeting the community's needs. Not a few people in Sidoarjo are economically affected or are disturbed in fulfilling their livelihoods due to government efforts to prevent the spread of Covid-19. The implementation of PSBB has seriously hit people's lives during this pandemic. A slogan spreads among the community "stay at home will die of hunger, leave home will die of the Corona". Even though the government has rolled out various social assistance packages, they have not met the standard needs they felt before the Covid-19 pandemic.

This study aims to answer this problem by analyzing and describing the efforts of the Sidoarjo Regency government in public communication

to face the New Normal period to break the chain of transmission of Covid-19. This study uses public communication theory, that every activity carried out by public institutions and organizations such as the local government of Sidoarjo Regency in designing information then conveyed and spread to the public regarding the new normal period with the main purpose of conveying and explaining public decisions and actions to break the Covid-19 transmission chain that functions as information, explaining, socializing and aspirations (dialogue). Sidoarjo Regency Government public communication facing the New Normal period will be analyzed using the communication model of Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication (CERC).

The use of the CERC communication model in handling crises such as the Covid-19 pandemic in several countries has been quite effective. This model is quite complete in preparing a communication strategy in a disaster like the Covid-19 pandemic. The advantages of the CERC communication model, if used in handling the Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia, are at least have three benefits. First, CERC includes a communication strategy before, during, and after the pandemic. In more detail, CERC has a communication strategy design for each stage of the crisis or what they call the Crisis Communication Lifecycle (CCL) (Vidiarti, Muhlis, & Rasib, 2019). This lifecycle divides a situation (such as a pandemic) into five stages, from pre-crisis (before a crisis occurs) to evaluation. Then they detail what needs to be done in terms of communication at each of these stages (CDC, 2014).

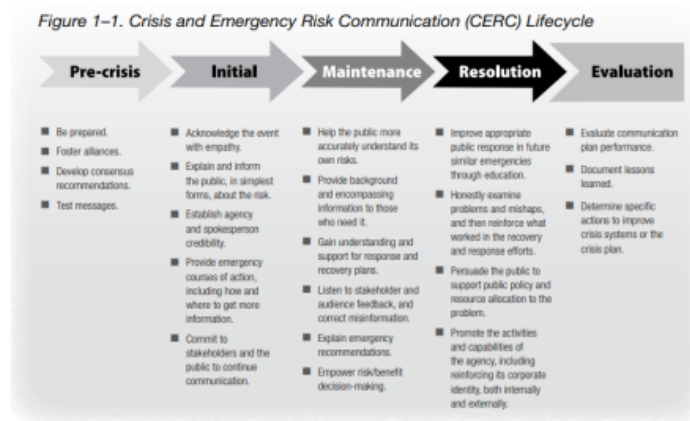


Figure 1. Model Of Crisis And Emergency Risk Communication (CERC) (Source: CDC, 2014)

The philosophical basis of CERC is that the public has the right to receive accurate information regarding crises that occur. The information must completely describe the conditions of the crisis and the risks that exist to help the public make rational decisions. Communication becomes a tool for the public to adopt the expected behavior to reduce risk. CERC combines the risk communication strategy commonly used by the government sector in emergencies and crisis communication that the private sector uses to deal with organizational crises.

The CERC stages in Sidoarjo Regency Government public communication in facing the New Normal period are applied in the Crisis Communication Lifecycle (CCL) stages, namely Pre-crisis, Initial, Maintenance, Resolution, Evaluation. Public communication is essential to provide directions for the people in their activities and behavior during the New Normal period to be safe and still be able to break the chain of Covid-19 transmission. The government needs to use communication channels suitable to the characteristics of the Sidoarjo people, which is hydrogen so that the public communication delivered can be effective and efficient in accordance with the purposes expected by the local government

of Sidoarjo Regency. The determination characteristics ensure that the messages and media used in the Covid-19 pandemic match the target audience (Haddow & Haddow, 2009).

For the people, communicative public communication is easy to understand and according to the level of media literacy they have. So, the shared communication message of the Sidoarjo Regency government is understood by urban communities and rural communities who still have low media literacy.

METHODS

This study used a qualitative descriptive-analytical method. The descriptive-analytical method is a method that aims to describe or provide an overview of a research object under study through samples or data that have been collected and make generally accepted conclusions (Patton, 2001). According to Denzin & Lincoln (2009), research with a qualitative approach describes the natural setting and social phenomena. The primary data of this study were obtained from interviews with informants who were determined by purposive sampling in accordance with the criteria determined by the researcher. The informants of this research are parties who have the competence and duty to convey public communication to the Sidoarjo people and policymakers. They are civil servants and public officials such as the Head of the Sidoarjo Regency Communication and Information Service, the Head of the Covid-19 handling group who is also the Head of the Sidoarjo Regency Health Office, the Chair of the Sidoarjo Regency DPRD, doctors, health workers, and also the community. Meanwhile, the secondary data was obtained from the website covid19.sidoarjo.go.id, IG ([igdinkes_sidoarjo](https://www.instagram.com/igdinkes_sidoarjo), [pemkabsidoarjo](https://www.instagram.com/pemkabsidoarjo)), socialization materials and reporting applications. Data analysts use the Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication (CERC) model through the Crisis Communication Lifecycle (CCL) stages, namely Pre-crisis, Initial, Maintenance, Resolution, Evaluation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Public Communication Of Sidoarjo Regency Government In Crisis Communication Lifecycle (CCL)

In the pre-crisis stage, the Sidoarjo Regency Government has made preparations for socialization with social media and other media such as banners and additional outdoor information. The data was obtained from interviews with informants who were executors of public communication for the Sidoarjo Regency Government. Interview with (AA) from the Communication and Information Office of Sidoarjo Regency said:

“The Sidoarjo Regency Government has made preparations and socialization in facing the new normal period after the implementation of PSBB by conducting massive socialization through websites, Instagram, banners, and billboards in various strategic places” (AA, 2020)

In the pre-crisis stage, the Sidoarjo Regency Government still relies on mass media as the channel used in socialization. Even though there are still many Sidoarjo residents who do not understand or are inactive on social media, the government should have approached the issue through lower-level government entities, such as the neighborhood unit (RT), according to scholarly interviews (KA):

“The government relies more on mass media and social media in the socialization of the New Normal, even though not all the people are active in media and have good media literacy” (KA, 2020).

Following WHO directives through the Director-General Thedros Adhanom on March 10, 2020, who asked the Indonesian government, including local governments, to educate and actively communicate with the public through proper risk communication and community involvement. Meanwhile, the public communication is done by the Sidoarjo Regency Government mainly uses a one-way communication model, namely mass

communication or media communication where there is less interaction with the community.

In the Initial stage of public communication of the Sidoarjo Regency Government, it can be seen that the Sidoarjo Regency Government at the beginning of the crisis implemented a curfew policy for community activities and business activities, for people who have no urgent interest can stay at home. The curfew policy is slightly different from the PSBB period when it starts at 9 pm until 6 am, but during the New Normal period, it becomes 11 pm until 4 am. The Sidoarjo Regency Government will also take disciplinary action for those who do not wear masks with moral sanctions and fines. The Municipal Police (*Satpol PP/ Satuan Polisi Pamong Praja*), Indonesian National Armed Forces (*TNI/ Tentara Negara Indonesia*), and Police will always conduct secrecy and enforce health protocols during the New Normal period.

The regulations for the New Normal period also applied to malls, supermarkets, restaurants, companies, educational and trade institutions such as traditional markets that must comply with the rules that have been enacted during the new normal period. However, from the results of the interview, it can be seen that the communication policy with punishment is not practical because people do not behave on their awareness, such as the results of an interview with an informant (FAD) an academic said:

“Yes, this New Normal rule makes people afraid of the sanctions and fines in the regulation, so people using masks are not self-conscious about breaking the chain of transmission, but ... because they are afraid of the sanctions” (FAD, 2020).

However, almost all informants said the Sidoarjo Regency Government did not explain what to do during the New Normal period other than 3M, considering that people would have normal activities as usual during the New Normal period. For those who have media literacy, the community can seek information from all sources of information,

including social media and mainstream media. The government did not explain which activities must maintain distance and congregation because there are still many social and religious activities running as usual as if nothing had happened. Public communication for the Sidoarjo Regency Government at the beginning of the New Normal period only socialized the existence of a complaint hotline through the application. It formed covid volunteers how the duties and functions of the covid council are not explained in the public communication of the Sidoarjo Regency Government.

In the maintenance stage of public communication, the Sidoarjo Regency Government has demonstrated its commitment to public communication by continuing to convey communication messages to ensure that people do not become careless in performing the three Ms via social media, print, and electronic media. As broad as public complaints about Covid-19. Like an interview with the Head of Covid-19 task force of the Sidoarjo Regency (DP) said:

“We continue to convey about health protocols to the community regarding 3M, wearing masks, keeping a distance and diligently washing hands and also having a healthy lifestyle, we do that through all existing communication channels so that people understand and participate in breaking the transmission of Covid-19.” (DP, 2020).

Numerous term changes are also occasionally confusing, as the New Normal transition period is not yet complete with large-scale social restrictions (PSBB), the new term for the New Normal transition period, and then with the term Enforcement of Community Activity Restrictions (*Pemberlakuan Pembatasan Kegiatan Masyarakat/PPKM*), which lasts for 14 days from January 11 to 25, 2021, with Justisi operating simultaneously in all districts. The maintenance tends only to repeat the implementation of 3M. There is no Risk Communication such as a standard about a team

of trained risk communication professionals that designs and implements risk communication strategies during a crisis. As there is equality between communicators and communicants, communication is built from the top to down and from the down to top and equal horizontally.

However, several informants stated that the Sidoarjo Regency Government's public communication was ineffective and inconsistent; there were no mass verbal communication messages to the public via the government structure from the RT level to the district level, which were limited to websites, banners, and billboards. At the Resolution stage, the Sidoarjo Regency Government's public communication was slow and inconsistent throughout the New Normal period, owing to the regions' inability to make independent choices due to their continued coordination with the Head of the Covid-19 task group. If any related cases or issues, such as patients who died before the swap test results were available, they would be buried according to the Covid-19 protocol, which occasionally resulted in miscommunication between families and Covid-19 funeral officers due to the lack of an accurate explanation. At the same time, the objective of risk communication is to communicate plainly and succinctly about the dangerous occurrences and risks associated with Covid-19 to affected people (Krimsky, 2007).

The affected people are heterogeneous people from diverse groups and have different responses to communication messages as perceptions of risk influence them. Successful risk communication must consider the population's unique needs and allow the exchange of information and opinions (Austin, Liu, & Jin, 2012). Therefore, the public communication of the Sidoarjo Regency Government must use risk messages related to the dangers of Covid-19 by using various communication channels based on applicable regulations (Reynolds & Seeger, 2005).

In the last stage is evaluation, the success of public communication by the Sidoarjo Regency Government can be measured by indicators:

1) Able to decrease positive numbers and suspects due to Covid-19 transmission. However, when New Normal was done, positive patients and suspects of Covid-19 in Sidoarjo Regency experienced an increase. It became an area that must carry out the Treatment of Restrictions on Community Activities (PPKM); 2) Increased recovery, which reached 7573 per January 16, 2020, from 8343 positive cases, and the number of deaths was still relatively high, around 541 people (Diskominfo Kabupaten Sidoarjo, 2020); 3) Change of status from the red zone to the orange zone. Several informants also conveyed that the Head of District also delivered the evaluation when visiting the DPRD. It was also seen from the level of discipline always to obey health protocols.

In the concept of communication evaluation, the managerial process is applied to obtain information as a reference in making decisions (Royse, Thyer, & Padgett, 2015). Arifin (2009) defines evaluation as a systematic and continuous process to determine the quality (value and meaning) of something based on specific considerations and criteria in the framework of decision making. Willian Dunn stated, “evaluation is the analytical policy methods used to produce information about the value or worth of past or future course of action”. Evaluation is a method for analyzing policies, producing information about programs that have been implemented, assessing the usefulness and benefits that have been achieved as a basis for making decisions about programs for the future. In Public Communication, the Sidoarjo Regency Government still has not considered heterogeneous communicants, so selecting message channels using social media is not very effective.

The Principles Of Public Communication Of Sidoarjo Regency Government In Facing The New Normal Covid-19

The first principle of public communication of Sidoarjo Regency Government is how the public gets information as quickly as possible

from the government and can be accessed massively by the community. Even though, in reality, the flow of information related to Covid-19 is very much, both social media and mainstream media as a source of information. People, especially in urban areas, get information from various sources and do this independently because they have sufficient literacy. Meanwhile, people in rural areas still rely heavily on opinion leaders as the primary source of information. Therefore opinion leaders such as community leaders, religious leaders, government structures such as RT-RW, and the role of local village heads as channels of information related to Covid-19 are still needed. Meanwhile, the public communication of Sidoarjo Regency Government prefers social media, especially on the Instagram account of Sidoarjo Regency Government (@igdinkes_sidoarjo); website <https://covid19.sidoarjokab.go.id/> from Sidoarjo Regency Covid-19 Information and Communication Center (Kabupaten Sidoarjo, 2020); and also the reporting application. As the results of an interview with W (initial), an employee of the Communication and Information Department who said:

“All information related to Covid-19 in Sidoarjo can be seen from the media used by the government in providing information such as Instagram (igdinkes_sidoarjo, pemkabsidoarjo) website (<https://covid19.sidoarjokab.go.id/>), and also the report application. So people do not need to look for information outside the media, the data presented is valid and always up to date every day.” (W, 2020).

Communication in crisis conditions requires speed and accuracy in handling it. The government, in this case, must have a sense of urgency in conveying information related to the crisis because the very fast spread of the Covid-19 virus requires immediate action as well. During a crisis like a pandemic, many information distortions will develop and have a confusing impact. Therefore, government public communication must be the first to avoid public distrust in handling the crisis. To ensure the speed

of this information delivery, the epidemic response communication team also needs to have a good and accurate information circulation monitoring system.

The second principle is that the public communication of Sidoarjo Regency Government tries to reduce disinformation by providing correct information to the Sidoarjo community and becoming a reference for the Sidoarjo community's need for information Covid-19. The step is to create media channels that the public can easily access. Although the flow of public information related to Covid-19 is relatively high, people have many choices regarding this Covid-19 information. However, communication channels between the community and the government can reduce disinformation on Covid-19. As the results of an interview with U (initial), the leader of the Sidoarjo Regency People's Representative Council:

“I think for Covid-19 data information, such as positive numbers, patients recovering and those who died are very up to date every day, because the government is trying to provide information that is fast and accurate, so that the public can follow Covid-19 updates simply from information media of Sidoarjo Regency Government.” (U, 2020).

However, some informants think that the information of Covid-19 in Sidoarjo is still inaccurate because it only presents quantitative data such as positive, recovered, and dead patients. As an interview with IE (initial), a doctor said:

“Sometimes people are confused when they see information that there is a positive patient in village A, but who is not informed, so the community becomes confused, there are also people who are hospitalized because of congenital disease then claimed as the Covid-19 patient, for no clear reason. This must be explained to the public.” (IE, 2020).

The amount of information in the media, especially social media, causes a contradiction in the flow of information in the community. This confusion of information causes the public to seek valid information from several other media sources. Therefore, the public communication of the Sidoarjo Regency Government has not been able to be a solution to this confusion because the flow of information outside is many more. While the information presented in the public communication of the Sidoarjo Regency Government is quantitative, mainly data related to the number of positive ones, people who recovered, and people who died. The informant admitted that regarding the data on Covid-19 patients, if there was uncertainty, information could be clarified or checked at the health office directly regarding the number of Covid-19 patients and their handling through the media provided the task force of handling Covid-19 in Sidoarjo Regency.

A crisis such as the Covid-19 pandemic, which is invisible, can create uncertainty. The principle of *Be Right* in CERC is to overcome uncertain situations with a communication strategy that is fast, accurate, and reliable. This is important to minimize disinformation due to many Hoax in various media. Wang, McKee, Torbica, & Stuckler (2019) recorded the number of hoax spreading around health issues such as pandemics and vaccines. Hoax in the health sector is very dangerous because it can slow down and prevent the process of handling problems and can even threaten life safety (Wang et al., 2019). And in a crisis like this pandemic now, psychologically, it is easier for people to believe the Hoax, even in conspiracy theories (Muller, 2020). At this point, the principle of accuracy of information is needed. Because the success of communication during a pandemic can also be seen from the extent to which it can overcome uncertainty along with rumors and Hoax (Vaughan & Tinker, 2009).

The government's mistakes in choosing communication media can obstruct the communication flow. According to Alfi & Saputro (2018), communication barriers caused by errors in choosing media are referred

to as technical barriers. These barriers can distort the message and may lead to misunderstandings by the message's recipient.

The consideration of the use of social media, for example, also requires a society's level of internet literacy. According to Tsaniyah & Juliana (2019), internet literacy is one of the benchmarks for establishing digital literacy in the community and can prevent the public from hoax news and information.

The third principle is that the public communication of Sidoarjo Regency Government is open and transparent in providing information on Covid-19 during New Normal. Information is always up to date delivered every day through the Sidoarjo Regency Government information media such as the website and social media. However, the data or identity of the Covid-19 patient is kept secret because it is the patient's right and the family's privacy. Some informants thought it was not good to keep data on Covid-19 patients a secret because it would create new infections due to the lack of information regarding Covid-19 patients. As the results of interviews with the following informant HDW (initial):

“The identity of the Covid-19 patient should have been completely informed to the public so that the public can also be careful to prevent transmission. And the government can take preventive action in the environment around the patient. So far, information is only limited to the number and origin of the village.” (HDW, 2020).

Another informant said that what is needed now is the government to socialize how the community can accept and continue to interact with patients who have recovered so that the surrounding neighborhood does not isolate them for fear of contracting them. As stated by the following informant IE (initial):

“The government must also conduct socialization related to patients who have recovered. So far, the public is still worried that patients who have recovered will transmit Covid-19 so

that they isolate them, both at home and at work, so it needs clear information from the government” (IE, 2020).

Public communication must hold to the principles of openness, urgency, and accuracy to get information and make the right decisions. In many literature on open communication during a pandemic, it is essential to reduce victims (Abraham, 2011; Holmes, 2008; Siegrist & Zingg, 2014; Vaughan & Tinker, 2009). In the CERC model, public trust results from an open and empathetic communication process (CDC, 2014). The credibility of government communications can be judged by the extent to which they are open to the public about the information they know and do not know. The institutions in charge of dealing with pandemics must treat the public as adults who can think healthily. This needs to be emphasized because sometimes the ‘restriction’ of information is carried out on the assumption of avoiding panic in the community. In fact, it is precisely the complete information that will be an important asset for the community to behave and make reasonable decisions. Restrictions, especially the delivery of dishonest information, will only reduce public trust in communicators.

While, the Indonesian Broadcasting Commission (KPI) number 123/K/KPI/31.2/03/2020 prohibits broadcasting institutions from mentioning patient identities such as names, photos, and addresses of people under the supervision of health authorities and do not exploit the environment where the patient lives. This becomes a dilemma between the need for public information disclosure to handle the spread of the virus and the protection of patient personal data.

The fourth principle is Sidoarjo Regency Government’s public communication, which includes expressions of concern and empathy for those exposed to Covid-19. This is manifested in basic food aid to people exposed to Covid-19 through connected agencies. Regent Officials and

the regional leadership communication forum visited families of those who recovered and died randomly to provide motivation and condolences. However, according to the informant EP (initial), said:

“There is no public communication statement regarding expression and concern in the media for patients and victims of Covid-19, it is only for certain cases, such as if the victims come from health workers, nurses, and doctors who died” (EP, 2020).

Empathic communication is critical for resolving conflicts sharing feelings with Covid-19 victims, and instilling public trust so that there is no panic in the community and the handling can proceed smoothly. The government should demonstrate empathy to alleviate the enormous burden on Covid-19 sufferers. Empathy communication might also be a sign that the government is taking the epidemic of Covid-19 exceptionally seriously. Empathy communication must be genuine, only expressing gratitude to all people who have attempted to manage Covid-19 cooperatively. There should be no ulterior motive for the government’s expression of appreciation for Covid-19 victims.

The fifth principle, Sidoarjo Regency Government public communication, has been implemented using proper communication principles, such as speed and accuracy, by establishing one-stop communication between the Covid-19 referral hospital and the Health Office information be accessed and delivered daily by the public. Communication has been carried out with a commitment to convey information quickly, precisely, and accurately, using mass media and social media as a place for disseminating information with reliable data and sources. Data suspect, data recovered, data died has been updated every day. Socialization of the new normal rules via zoom and informative public communication as proof that the plan was implemented successfully. The PSC 119 team can immediately assist Covid-19 patients and their families.

The informants stated that the Sidoarjo Regency Government's public message was credible. In general, the Sidoarjo Regency Government's public communication strategy continues to be limited to communication via media, particularly social media, and to a lesser extent, interpersonal communication and persuasive communication with the population.

The Sidoarjo Regency Government's sixth principle, Public Communication, is to respect patients and their families, health staff, and anyone else involved in handling Covid-19 in Sidoarjo. Respectful communication fosters collaboration and positive relationships among victims, the community, and the government to alleviate the burden of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Public communication of Sidoarjo Regency Government is expected to be proactive in giving appreciation and reward to health workers, volunteers, donors, and the community, both individuals and groups fighting in the forefront of fighting Covid-19. Gratitude can also be realized by providing incentives for health workers on time and suitable with existing regulations as proof of their seriousness in appreciating them in dealing with Covid-19. There has been no public appreciation through the Sidoarjo Regency Government website or the Covid-19 special website.

Appreciation is not only given to health workers and doctors who have contracted the Covid-19 virus or who died, but must be given to all those who participated in breaking the chain of transmission of Covid-19. Such as appreciation for the establishment of Muhammadiyah Covid Command Center (CCC) by Muhammadiyah contributed to the handling of Covid-19 for the victims or affected families and the general public. Likewise, the Sidoarjo Regional General Hospital (RSUD/ *Rumah Sakit Umum Daerah*) appreciates health workers and doctors as the front guard in overcoming Covid-19. Appreciation must be given sincerely and not to build the image of the government and personal leadership, which is often

the main goal in communication activities with the public from many government agencies. The Covid-19 pandemic must not be commodified into commodities, objects, and signs used for imaging purposes (Hariyanto, 2018). During the New Normal period, the public communication of Sidoarjo Regency Government has not continuously given appreciation to all parties who contributed to the handling of Covid-19 except for the security apparatus of the Police, (TNI/ *Tentara Negara Indonesia*), and Municipal Police (Satpol PP/ *Satuan Polisi Pamong Praja*).

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

Public communication of Sidoarjo Regency Government in facing New Normal period has not been effective according to the Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication (CERC) model. The reasons are, *first*, the public communication of Sidoarjo Regency Government in facing the New Normal period is more focused on mass media and social media, even though there are still many Sidoarjo people who lack media literacy. The communication model that is built is one-way. There is no community involvement in public communication that should exist in a disaster crisis. *Second*, the public communication of Sidoarjo Regency Government in facing the New Normal period does not take advantage of persuasive communication in the form of interpersonal communication and group communication, both verbal and nonverbal, by utilizing existing social organization channels. *Third*, the public communication of Sidoarjo Regency Government in facing the New Normal period has not fully utilized community leaders, religious leaders, RT, and RW as the foremost opinion leaders in conducting public communication to the community regarding the New Normal period. *Fourth*, the public communication of Sidoarjo Regency Government in facing the New Normal period still prioritizes instructive, coercive communication techniques in the form of punishments rather than persuasiveness and education.

Suggestion

It is recommended that the public communication Sidoarjo Regency Government be adjusted to the characteristics of the Sidoarjo community who are heterogeneous and have various media literacy skills. The selection of communication channels must be right on target, pay attention to community psychology, the communication messages must be communicative to provide information related to the New Normal period. For further research, it is possible to explore public communications done by the government and Non-Government Organizations (NGO), community organizations, and educational institutions in the community during a pandemic.

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