



ISSN 1648-2603 (print)
ISSN 2029-2872 (online)

VIEŠOJI POLITIKA IR ADMINISTRAVIMAS
PUBLIC POLICY AND ADMINISTRATION
2023, T. 22, Nr. 4 / 2023, Vol. 22, No 4, p. 609–626.

PUBLIC COMMUNICATION THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN SLEMAN REGENCY, YOGYAKARTA

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DOI: 10.13165/VPA-23-22-4-16

Abstract. *The role of the government in implementing public communication was important when handling COVID-19, both as a method of prevention and as a form of persuasion to adopt COVID-19 vaccination. This was undertaken by the Sleman Regency Government through public relations, with the appointment of a spokesperson for the COVID-19 Task Force and the active formulation of strategies in government communication regarding the handling and prevention of the COVID-19 pandemic through social media. This shows the importance of public communication by digital-based governments during a pandemic. This study aims to determine the social media-based communication model of the Sleman Regency Government when handling COVID-19. This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study method. Data collection was carried out through in-depth interviews and FGDs with public relations staff of the Sleman Regency Government, Regional Apparatus Organizations (OPD), and the people of Sleman. The analysis technique uses the Miles and Huberman model, consisting of three streams of activities that occur simultaneously: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions/verification using source triangulation techniques. The results of the study show that government communication activities carried out by the Sleman Regent have a great influence and are trusted to convey information related to the COVID-19 pandemic. This can be seen on social media (on Facebook and X, formerly Twitter, @KabarSleman, and on Instagram @HumasSleman), where warnings related to COVID-19 were routinely conveyed to the fullest extent by the Regent of Sleman Regency. In addition, public relations still involves conventional media such as newspapers, outdoor media and digital outdoor media such as LED screens. The novelty of this research is in the notion that the government must have one voice in public communication, even though it uses various channels. Information provided to the public is designed to follow central government appeals, and must have the same news value so as not to cause public confusion.*

Keywords: *Government Communication; Social Media; Sleman Regency; COVID-19.*

Reikšminiai žodžiai: *vyriausybės komunikavimas; socialinės medijos; Slemano regentystė; COVID-19.*

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic at the end of 2019 was a non-natural disaster that became an international crisis. Yogyakarta Special Region had the highest number of COVID-19 cases in Indonesia, but was able to vaccinate its population of 1,318,086 within 11 months of the outbreak of the pandemic (Surianta 2021). This strong desire for vaccination illustrates the level of education of the public on information related to vaccination and the role of the public relations strategy of the Sleman Regency Government in communicating policy to the public regarding the handling and prevention of the COVID-19 pandemic. Public communication is an activity that involves developing a communication strategy to provide information, form awareness, and influence people's behavior (Dijkzeul and Moke 2005). In public communication, it is necessary to compose messages by creating a common meaning and adapting to the community's needs. Public communication should be consistent, formal, and oriented toward certain goals (Subandriyo 2020). Public communication is a communication process carried out by the government or public institutions that serves to provide information and policies that have been formulated. Public communication can be useful as a governmental tool in conveying effective messages as an effort to overcome disinformation related to COVID-19 (Nabila and Santoso 2021).

The government regulated the management of public communication as stated in Presidential Instruction (Inpres) Number 9 of 2015 concerning the Management of Public Communications. This Instruction was compiled by the Ministry of Communication and Information with the aim of supporting the success of the working cabinet, absorbing public aspirations and accelerating the delivery of information on government policies and programs. To convey public communication so that it is accepted by the public, careful and precise planning is needed. Thus, the right communication strategy is required so that the message can be conveyed and can function as a space for open dialogue between the public and the Government.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, public communication was performed through various media platforms, as indicated by No. 1 part C of Circular Letter document Number Hk.02.01/Menkes/199/2020 concerning Communication for Handling Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) "Making Communication Products and Conveying/Disseminating Information in accordance with Public Communication Protocols (Letter Documents). Circular of the Minister of Health". The basis of this regulation is the idea that it does not allow communication in the form of socialization or direct face-to-face contact, so e-Government regulations are a solution for the government in providing information related to COVID-19 to the public quickly and efficiently. Based on regulations on Central Government policies submitted to Regional Governments, each Regional Govern-

ment must have a digital media product to communicate between the Government and the community. This drove the Sleman Regency Government to implement digital-based public communication through social media.

The Sleman Regency Government actively uses digital media to convey information and communicate with the public. Digital-based public communication is a form of public relations involving carrying out e-government regulations that makes it easier to provide services to the community. According to Ohmae (Wasisto 2003), in the future the world will become borderless; there will be no physical boundaries between a country and a government administration. As McLuhan asserted, communication as a form of social interaction no longer has to be conducted face to face (physically), but can be conducted through audio (sound) and visual (image) means via the internet using a webcam (Windiasih 2019).

Therefore, this research focuses on examining the social media-based public communication model used by the Sleman Regency Government in tackling the COVID-19 pandemic. This study describes the form of public communication carried out by the Sleman Regency Government as part of the COVID-19 pandemic task force and its success in informing the public through digital-based communication by participating and paying attention to the actors, messages and media used. The results of the research can be used as a reference for social media-based government public communication models during the COVID-19 pandemic, which could be adopted by other districts. This research also adds empirical insights about social humanities, especially public communication and public relations communication.

Literature Review

The study of public communication through social media during the COVID-19 pandemic in Sleman Regency, Yogyakarta, develops previous research on public communication by government public relations strategies. This research involves the use of social media in disseminating information on government programs, and shows that social media is one of the most effective means of disseminating information. Each form of social media has specific uses that affect its advantages and disadvantages, and which need to be adjusted to in order to enable proper information dissemination (Novianti et al. 2020). Uthama, Saefulrahman, and Akbar's (2022) research shows that information media has not been fully able to achieve its goal of disseminating all information on government work programs, especially in the health sector, to the wider community because it does not necessarily cover all aspects of the community.

Regarding the state of the COVID-19 pandemic as a non-natural disaster, preventive communication is important. Nurjanah, Ishak and Sakir (2021) conducted a study that describes disaster communication in five disaster-prone provinces in Indonesia through conventional media (direct communication, HTs, mosque horn speakers) and new media (websites, WhatsApp groups, social media, and applications). Government public relations play a role in communication in pre-, during-, and post-disaster events by prioritizing communication, information, coordination and cooperation (KIKK), together

with the OPD and the community (community leaders, religious leaders, and disaster care communities). In other words, both conventional and new media are inseparable in public communication.

The results of Rahmanto's (2022) research show that social media has a positive and significant effect on public perceptions of good governance and its three aspects. The findings of this study support previous research which indicates that the use of social media can increase government transparency and citizen participation. This is also supported by Roosinda (2021), who demonstrated that the government of Surabaya city uses Instagram as a forum for delivering information to the people of Surabaya, especially during the COVID-19 crisis. The Instagram content of the Surabaya city government, delivered through the @sapawargasby account, which is managed by the Surabaya Department of Communication and Information, is vital in this regard. The Surabaya Government is responsive in the application of prevention measures and health protocols to inhibit COVID-19, but it also displays other policies that are very beneficial to the people of Surabaya on Instagram (Roosinda 2021).

In addition, Firdaus, Tursina and Roziqin (2021) analyzed changes in the bureaucracy of the Indonesian Government during the COVID-19 pandemic. They discovered the challenges that must be faced in encouraging the transformation of the digital bureaucracy, where each stakeholder agreed that this transformation must be accelerated. The government is rapidly being forced to move toward a digital future and take advantage of significant opportunities to advance the knowledge and innovation ecosystem with technology, collaboration and co-creation. Previous research on public communication by government public relations departments has not discussed the content of public communication models in the COVID-19 pandemic with a digital approach, especially one that includes social media. The current research aims to fill this gap.

Methods

This research was conducted to uncover the role of the Sleman Regency Government in using social media in its efforts to communicate with the public regarding handling the COVID-19 pandemic. To establish this, the research method used in this study is a descriptive method with a qualitative approach. The researcher chose to use the descriptive method because this method can provide an explanation or picture of the actual situation of the research object. The descriptive research method is used to describe or analyze a research result but not to make broader conclusions (Sugiyono, 2013). A qualitative approach, according to Sugiyono, is based on the philosophy of postpositivism used in the natural conditions of the research object, where the researcher is a key instrument. The sampling of data sources was carried out in a purposive manner by taking samples and assigning special characteristics according to the research objectives (Sugiyono, 2013).

The researcher conducted this research by collecting data through interviews as well as via documentation. The research conducted by the author required data obtained from various sources. Each source or informant is an important part of the data collection technique, especially if the research is conducted using interviews. Data were obtained

through in-depth interviews with the public relations department of the Sleman Regency Government via Shavitri Nurmala Dewi, the spokesperson for the COVID-19 Task Force of Sleman, and secondary data was attained via documents on social media (the Instagram, X, and Youtube pages of the Sleman Regency Government). The selection of respondents in this study was considered most appropriate because Shavitri Nurmala Dewi is a representative of the public relations department of the Government, as well as carrying out her role as a spokesperson for the handling of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Regarding data triangulation, interviews were also conducted with the Sleman community to obtain valid information and data suitability. Secondary data were collected from the internet and related documents. A data validity test was conducted through source triangulation. The Miles and Huberman model was utilized to analyze the data (Miles, Huberman and Saldana 2014). This method was chosen to obtain in-depth and precise conclusions from research results related to the use of digital media by the Sleman Regency Government through social media in an effort to communicate to the public regarding the handling of vaccination during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Results

Media are introductory or intermediary tools that function to convey messages or information from a source to the recipient of the message. Meanwhile, information is the collection of data or facts that have been processed in such a way as to produce something that can be understood and provide benefit to the recipient (Rahmani 2016). From this explanation, information media is composed of easy-to-use internet-based platforms that allow users to create and share information. In this case, the information media used by government agencies is social media. Therefore, government agencies utilize information media (social media) to maintain and enhance the reputation of institutions and to explore public aspirations. This study discusses the role of public communication in handling COVID-19 using social media to support message delivery.

Public Communication of COVID-19 Handling by the Sleman Regency Government

At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Sleman Regency Government, as the regional government, could not take major preventive actions through public relations because the Indonesian Government system took its policy from the direction of the central government. Thus, the public relations department of the Sleman Regency Government carried out public communication when COVID-19 was present in the community. The message conveyed was up-to-date information regarding the development of cases and steps to reduce the spread of COVID-19, called *Citamasjajar (Cuci Tangan Pakai Masker Jaga Jarak)*.

Based on an in-depth interview with Dr. Shavitri Nurmala Dewi, who was responsible for the public relations of the Sleman Regency Government as well as serving as the spokesperson for the Acceleration of Handling COVID-19, the limited and outdated

information in the above policy caused conflicts at the beginning between the central government and local governments. This is because the central government wanted everything centrally arranged, but the information conveyed took a long time, so local governments also took their own approach when dealing with their communities.

This was also stated in the results of research by Dunan, who said that the problem that occurs in disseminating information regarding central government policies to the regions is a lack of communication and coordination between government public relations departments at the central and regional levels (Dunan 2020):

We, as the government's public relations officers, act as mediators between the government and the community. So, the messages we convey are the results of research, technical knowledge from meetings with agencies related to handling COVID-19, and the message of the importance of vaccination and *Citamasjajar*. *Citamasjajar* is an acronym for washing hands, wearing masks, and keeping a distance, a slogan created by the Health Department of Sleman Regency. (Shavitri Nurmala Dewi, Public Relations of the Sleman Regency Government. Interview results on March 14, 2022)

Good handling of the communication relating to this disaster has implications for the prevention of the spread of COVID-19. Based on news from IDXchannel.com and Republikajogja.co.id, COVID-19 cases in Sleman Regency began to decrease (Erlin 2022). On February 27, 2022, 769 cases were recorded. This figure then dropped drastically to 322 cases on February 28, 2022, and 555 cases on March 1, 2022. On February 28, 2022, Sleman confirmed that the COVID-19 number of cases in the regency was no longer the highest in Yogyakarta (Suryana 2022).

We have to keep in touch with the community. That way, our goal is to provide information as community guidance and look forward to it being useful for the community to remind each other. (Shavitri Nurmala Dewi, Public Relations of the Sleman Regency Government. Interview results on March 14, 2022)

According to the public relations department of the Sleman Regency Government, public communication for non-natural disasters, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, contains messages that must be delivered quickly, accurately, and on a massive scale:

Conveying information on COVID-19 and Merapi eruption is different, despite both being natural disasters, because people can physically see the condition of Merapi and they will easily believe it. However, we cannot see what COVID-19 looks like; therefore, the delivery of messages must be clear, accurate, massive and fast to prevent people from receiving wrong information from untrusted sources. (Shavitri Nurmala Dewi, Public Relations of the Sleman Regency Government. Interview results on March 14, 2022)

Proper public communication will provide useful information in reducing public panic due to unclear issues and rumors. The effort to achieve this was carried out by the public relations department of the Sleman Regency Government by providing accurate information with up-to-date and credible data:

Mrs. Evi has been a public relations officer for a long time, and we, as the community, believe in the information she conveyed because accurate data always

accompanies it. (Anton, Sleman Community. Interview results on April 2, 2022)

Public communication to reduce disaster risks in emergency and non-emergency situations has a variety of message strategies. These strategies can be adapted to local, regional, national and international conditions. Therefore, disaster communication is a dynamic and interactive process involving exchanges between various groups, as performed by the Sleman Regency Government. In handling the non-natural disaster of the COVID-19 pandemic, public relations departments also collaborated with relevant regional apparatus organizations (OPDs):

The cooperation relationship in handling COVID-19 adjusts the distribution of concerns, including the education, communication and information, social, operational, and economic sectors. Regional apparatus organizations (OPDs) related to education include BPBD, the Education Department, Bapeda, Prof. Warno (an Expert), the Health Department, and the Culture Department. OPDs related to communication consist of BPBD, the Health Department, public relations departments of Sleman Regency, and Kominfo. Furthermore, social OPDs cover the Social Department, Health Workers, the Health Department, Public Health, BIN, and the P3AP Service. Then, OPDs related to operations involve the district head, BPBD, BKAD, POLRES, DANDIM, and BIN. Finally, economic OPDs include the Cooperatives, Industry and Trade Department, Economic Affairs, Banking, Bank Directors, and the Tourism Department. (Shavitri Nurmala Dewi, Public Relations of the Sleman Regency Government. Interview results on March 14, 2022)

The public relations department of the Sleman Regency Government explained that it was important to establish cooperative relationships with other agencies to improve the quality of information delivery and minimize misunderstandings. In addition to collaborating with the local government, the public relations department of the Sleman Regency Government also communicates with the aim of forming a community within the community. This is important considering that the government will not be able to operate alone without the involvement of the community. As stated by the Deputy Mayor of Yogyakarta, Heroe Poerwadi:

By inviting the community to participate in handling COVID-19, the COVID-19 disaster will be more easily overcome and the community can adapt to the existing conditions as well as find their own way to rise from their condition. (Heroe, Pemkot DIY).

The form of communication carried out by the public relations department of the Sleman Regency Government in establishing direct public communication with the community was through a Whatsapp group. This group on Whatsapp consists of representatives from each Government Service related to handling COVID-19, the media, and representatives from each Kapanewon.

The Use of Social Media by the Sleman Regency Government in Handling COVID-19

The regulations of Central Government policies submitted to Regional Governments became the initial basis for implementing the use of digital media. This mainly included Circular Letter document Number Hk.02.01/Menkes/199/2020 concerning Communication for Handling Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) – namely No.1 part C, which concerns “Making Communication Products and Conveying / Disseminating Information in accordance with Public Communication Protocols (Letter Documents) Circular of the Minister of Health”. Besides this, the media is useful for gathering information and conveying messages, appeals, warnings, or invitations quickly to change behavior to comply with health protocols:

The growing media, despite its negative effects, helps us spread information and listen to reports from the public directly. Thus, the government can provide information to the public quickly. (Shavitri Nurmala Dewi, Public Relations of the Sleman Regency Government. Interview results on March 14, 2022)

The digital media used by the Sleman Regency Government covers the website www.slemankab.go.id, the Kabar Sleman Facebook page, the @HumasSleman Instagram profile, the @KabarSleman X account, and the Sleman TV Youtube channel:

In general, the message information we convey is relatively the same. However, it is back again to the community on what media and how often it is used. Therefore, we always try to provide as much information as possible from various existing digital media platforms. (Shavitri Nurmala Dewi, Public Relations of the Sleman Regency Government. Interview results on March 14, 2022)

The Sleman Regency Government has implemented digital communication techniques by compiling press releases every day for publication on websites, Instagram, and X by adding attractive designs so that information can be received properly and completely.

According to Shavitri Nurmala Dewi, the preparation of digital content on Instagram and X includes the core message of press releases delivered to conventional media. This is adapted to the nature of the social media audience, which prefers short and to-the-point information. In the Instagram content below, the main message is an official circular from the Regent of Sleman Regency outlining the core policy established.

The use of Instagram is sufficient to support the process of disseminating information for preventive steps and has several features, such as: uploading photos and videos, commenting, showing support (giving likes to a post), DM (direct messaging), exploring (providing other popular posts), and stories (allowing users to upload photos or videos separately from their feeds). One form of public communication implemented by the Regent of the Sleman Regency Government on digital media is provided in Figure 1.

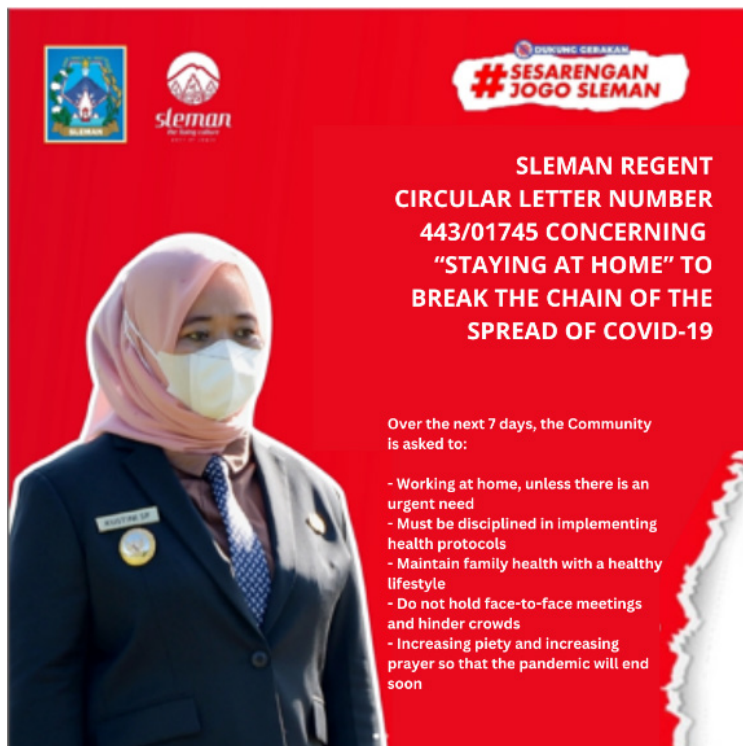


Figure 1. Instagram Content on the @HumasSleman page

In addition to Instagram, the public relations department of the Sleman Regency Government employed X (formerly Twitter) to write posts. The information provided tended to be more interesting and clearer, with the help of infographics explaining the latest information on COVID-19 developments:

With a supportive design, the information compiled in infographics makes it easier for us as the community to receive clearer information, images of visual aids become more points to help us process information effectively. Miyosa (Community of Sleman Regency. Interview results on March 20, 2022)

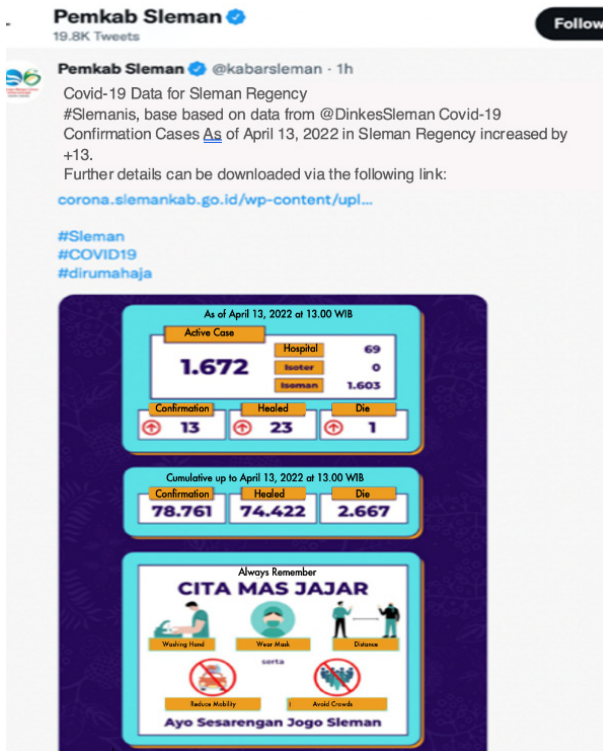


Figure 2. X Content on the @PemkabSleman account

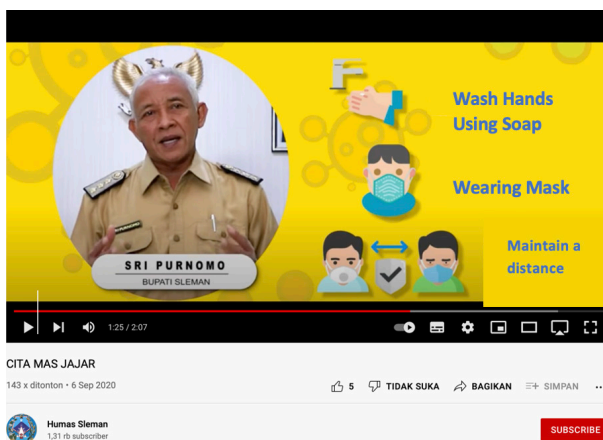


Figure 3. Youtube Content on the @HumasSleman Channel

Furthermore, the Regent of Sleman Regency Government also carried out public communication with a digital media approach through the Sleman Public Relations YouTube channel. For example, in a video campaigning for the “Cita Mas Jajar” Movement, Cita is interpreted as washing hands, Mas means wearing a mask, and Jajar stands for social distancing. This visual socialization of Cita Mas Jajar was carried out in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic in Sleman, but public attention was relatively low (Pratiwi and Arisanto 2021), with only around 143 viewers watching the video.

The system of communication within the organization depends on each section or level of technical communication. The flow and the communication media used from the leadership level to the subordinates will differ from subordinate to superior level. The same applies to the flow of media communication within one level, such as between employees of one department (depending on the employee relations and communication media model). Therefore, the use of media with style and design was adapted to the target audience of the Sleman Regency. The public relations department of the Sleman Regency Government also utilized conventional media to support public communication in handling COVID-19. This included billboards, posters, banners, and pamphlets, the content of which was coordinated with the Health Department to prevent misinformation. The Sleman Regency Government maintained two-way communication, facilitated communication with the public, and kept communication channels open. The use of various existing media facilitated the smooth public communication carried out by the public relations department of the Sleman Regency Government with its community.

Discussion

Public communication is defined as the activity of understanding, designing, implementing, and evaluating successful communication campaigns within a framework to serve the public interest. It is used to inform or persuade, build relationships, and encourage open dialogue toward long-term solutions within the organization or community (Pearson et al. 2003).

Public Communication of a Non-Natural Disaster: The COVID-19 Pandemic

Based on the data above, it is clear that the public relations department and the Regent of the Sleman Regency Government carried out public communication when COVID-19 was present in the community. The message conveyed included up-to-date information regarding the development of cases and steps to reduce the spread of COVID-19, called *Citamajajar*. The messages conveyed by the public relations department of the Sleman Regency Government involved a unique form of public communication because they provided persuasive, easy to remember messages (Nisa 2015). Hence, in the application of this information strategy, every message communicated by the public relations department of the Sleman Regency Government could be accepted, and every instruction could be carried out by the community. This was seen in the high enthusiasm of the community

for vaccination and the rapid decline in cases in the regency.

According to Dennis Dijkzeul and Markus Moke (2005), public communication is defined as activities and strategies aimed at a certain target audience. The purpose of public communication is to provide information to the target audience, increase awareness and influence the attitudes or behavior of the target audience. The public relations department of the Sleman Regency Government knew what steps must be taken in communicating COVID-19 to the public, so delivering quickly based on accurate data was key, as stated by Dijkzeul and Moke. This is also supported by Coppola and Maloney's description of the importance of information about disasters for the community. Once the community is appropriately informed about a hazard, they will be ready to take appropriate action to reduce their vulnerability to hazard risks (Coppola and Maloney 2009).

The role of government public relations departments in communicating disasters to the public is one of the most important aspects of reducing uncertainty (Deane 2015), as one of the key characteristics of disasters is that they are always accompanied by uncertainty. Public communication regarding natural and non-natural disasters represents a comprehensive effort to prevent and reduce disaster risks by managing messages or information, distributing messages, and receiving messages from the pre-, during-, and post-disaster stages (Lestari et al. 2021).

Particularly in public communication involving cooperation between Regional Apparatus Organizations (OPD), this provides a further incentive for integration between Sleman Government OPDs. As a leading institution in handling the COVID-19 pandemic, the Regional Government can carry out internal consolidation and build synergies with external institutions. Internal consolidation was carried out to ensure that village and sub-district officials and all related OPDs work optimally in dealing with COVID-19. The local government must ensure the availability of health facilities, medicines, health workers and the community to implement strict policies.

This was achieved by the public relations department of the Sleman Regency Government in synergy with related institutions such as Central Government agencies, community/religious leaders, entrepreneurs and others. Regional heads are expected to be effective leaders in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Community/religious/political leaders should be role models for society, as described by Ki Hajar Dewantara: "Ing Ngarso Sug Tulodo, Ing Madya Mangun Karso, Tut Wury Handayani." This means that leaders must: lead by example from the front; build ideas from within; and support and motivate from behind. These figures are expected to build optimism and togetherness, and support conduciveness in the community.

Entrepreneurs are strategic partners of the government in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. With the resources they have, entrepreneurs can help the government provide health facilities, medicines and other necessary supplies. Entrepreneurs are expected to increase compassion and avoid bad business practices, such as hoarding goods needed by the community. Students, as future leaders of the nation, can provide constructive thoughts in dealing with COVID-19 and become problem solvers. Real action can also be taken by helping the government increase people's awareness of the implementation of

programs, spreading optimism through massive social media campaigns. The role of the community in handling COVID-19 is very important in implementing strict procedures and maintaining health. Communities can also increase solidarity by helping others in need (Ayundari 2021).

The Social Media-Based Public Communication Model of the Sleman Regency Government

Local government information and communication technology (ICT) media, embodied in government websites or electronic government (e-government), can be used as digital communication media in regional development to realize democratization, transparency, participation, evaluation, control and public interaction. Most government public relations practitioners believe that social media benefits their organizations (Wright, Kumagi and Bonney 2001), including in handling the COVID-19 pandemic.

Social media is useful for gathering information and conveying messages, appeals, warnings, or invitations quickly to change behavior to comply with health protocols. The public relations department of the Sleman Regency Government has realized that the need for fast public interaction in handling COVID-19 requires fast communication tools. Therefore, that the use of digital media becomes a center point in communicating regarding COVID-19. Research by Salahuddin et al. (2020, as cited in Alnizar and Manshur 2022) on how the Indonesian government uses X to campaign for programs and policies to control the COVID-19 pandemic also found that social media has a significant and important role. Through social media, communication and coordination focused on the theme of overcoming COVID-19 involved requests and directives from the central government to: unite against the virus, know and understand it, comply with central government policies, pay attention to the interests of the state, and care for Indonesia (Alnizar and Manshur 2022).

The role of digital media is to disseminate information with transparency and accountability to the public regarding planning, implementation and development outcomes. According to Davis (2003), the benefits of e-government digital media include: (1) the efficiency and effectiveness of administrative affairs and costs; (2) improving the ability to respond to various requests, proposals, and questions as well as criticisms about public services to be more practical, fast and effective; (3) providing access to services and communication networks for consolidation and dissemination to all departments and non-departments at all levels more quickly, effectively and efficiently; (4) establishing interactions, aspirations, accommodation and socialization and providing information; and (5) participation, interaction and consolidation (unifying) media for the community to channel feedback freely, without fear. Moreover, Maksum (Windiasih, 2019) explained that the function of digital media through e-government is to strengthen and support the existence and function of public relations for the central or regional government. Public relations departments within organizations serve as a method to build public trust.

Subsequently, Rice (2009) asserted that digital media: provides benefits in the production sector of the economy; improves public sector administration, especially trans-

parency in the procurement process for public service contracts; reduces corrupt practices; and increases the potential for education. Therefore, the use of digital media by the public relations department of the Sleman Regency Government – including the website www.slemankab.go.id, the Kabar Sleman Facebook page, the @HumasSleman Instagram profile, the @KabarSleman account on X, and the Sleman TV Youtube channel – is very appropriate because it supports a varying form of messages that can be conveyed. This is in line with the opinion of McQuail and Corne (Dijkzeul and Moke 2005) that the role of technology can inform and describe all political activities through a communication network to reach a wider audience in a more attractive form. Through a multimedia system that integrates text, images and sound, the display of an event is easier to understand by the media audience. Therefore, the use of digital media by the public relations department of the Sleman Regency Government is effective, as proven by the decrease in the number of COVID-19 cases in the Sleman Regency.

However, the use of conventional media cannot be neglected, because digital media literacy is still not evenly distributed within these communities. This is because there are consequences that follow the use of digital media, namely: the existence of cyber-crimes; technological limitations; people who are not literate on the content that needs to be shared; technical constraints in the form of inadequate network infrastructure; and inequality in the community's ability to access modern media facilities (Windiasih, 2019). Therefore, the steps taken by the public relations department of the Sleman Regency Government, which still involve collaborating with conventional media, are also the right steps when communicating with the public for the effective prevention of the spread of COVID-19.

Conclusion

Public communication plays a significant role in reducing the dangers of a non-natural disaster such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on Circular Letter Document Number Hk.02.01/Menkes/199/2020 concerning Communication for Handling Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) – namely No.1-part C, entitled “Making Communication Products” – the importance of digital media for public communication as a solution for the government in providing information related to COVID-19 to the public quickly and efficiently is clear. Based on the regulations of Central Government policies submitted to Regional Governments, each Regional Government must have a digital media product to communicate with each other and between the Government and the community. This is what caused the Sleman Regency Government to implement digital-based public communication to urge the prevention of the transmission of COVID-19, and to urge for COVID-19 vaccination. This study highlighted the significant role of public communication delivered by the Sleman Regency Government in conveying preventive and up-to-date information related to case developments and appeals to reduce the spread of COVID-19, using the “Citasmajajar” slogan.

There are differences in public communication specific to the COVID-19 pandemic: messages must be conveyed quickly, accurately and on a massive scale; hence, the public

relations department of the Sleman Regency Government used digital media. Digital media is useful for obtaining information, as government public relations departments can quickly convey information, appeals, warnings, or calls for behavioral change to comply with health protocols. The digital media used by the public relations department of the Sleman Regency Government included the website www.slemankab.go.id, the Sleman News Facebook page, the @HumasSleman Instagram account, the @KabarSleman X profile, and the Sleman TV Youtube Channel. Moreover, the public relations department of the Sleman Regency Government was also aware that digital media could not be separated from conventional media. Hence, to support public communication related to the effective handling of COVID-19, the public relations department of the Sleman Regency Government continued to use conventional media such as billboards, posters, banners, and pamphlets, and published the book *Sleman Tangguh* as a way to educate the public and promote the Sleman Regency.

The development of digital media will facilitate governments' abilities to communicate with their communities, but researchers foresee that the public relations department of the Sleman Regency Government must still pay attention to the responses of users. As seen from the minimal number of YouTube views, access to communication on digital media is still not evenly distributed. Therefore, the researcher provides two recommendations: (1) the importance of developing communication with digital media through e-Government to improve good, fast and responsive public communication, active participation from the public, and transparency of both budgets and programs must be emphasized; and (2) the existence of information technology gaps must be anticipated, requiring an increase in the competence of human resources in local government and the public, as well as the expansion of access to information network facilities to support effective and targeted public communication.

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VIEŠAS KOMUNIKAVIMAS PASITELKIANŲ SOCIALINĖS MEDIJAS INDONEZIJOS SLEMANO REGENTYSTĖJE YOGYAKARTAJOJE COVID-19 PANDEMIJOS METU

Anotacija. Valdžios vaidmuo įgyvendinant viešąjį komunikavimą kovos su pandemija metu buvo ir yra svarbus prevencijos tikslais, taip pat tai aktualu siekiant įtikinti gyventojus skiepytis nuo COVID-19. Indonezijos Slemano regentystės vyriausybė tam pasitelkė viešuosius ryšius: buvo paskirtas COVID-19 darbo grupės atstovas spaudai, kuris pasitelkė socialinę žiniasklaidą ir aktyviai prisidėjo formuojant regioninės vyriausybės komunikacijos strategijas dėl COVID-19 pandemijos valdymo ir prevencijos.

Šiuo tyrimu siekta pateikti ir įvertinti Slemano regentystės valdžios komunikavimo modelį, susijusį su COVID-19 pandemijos valdymu ir pagrįstą socialine žiniasklaida. Atliekant tyrimą taikytas aprašomasis kokybinis metodas ir atvejo analizės metodas. Duo-

menys rinkti atliekant nuodugnus interviu su Slemano regentystės viešųjų ryšių atstovais, regioninėmis organizacijomis (OPD) ir gyventojais. Taip pat buvo pasitelktas Miles ir Huberman modelis. Tyrimo rezultatai rodo, kad Slemano regentystės valdžios vykdoma komunikacijos veikla yra reikšminga ir patikima norint perteikti informaciją, susijusią su COVID-19 pandemija. Tai buvo galima pamatyti socialinėje žiniasklaidoje, pvz., „Facebook“, „X @KabarSleman“ ir „Instagram @HumasSleman“ paskyrose, per kurias buvo nuolat perduodami valdžios išpėjimai, susiję su COVID-19. Be to, viešųjų ryšių skyrius vis dar naudoja ir įprastas laikmenas, pvz., laikraščius, lauko laikmenas ir skaitmenines lauko laikmenas (pvz., LED). Šiuo tyrimu atskleista ir įrodyta, kad valdžia turi komunikuoti „vienu balsu“, nors ir naudojasi įvairiais kanalais. Visuomenei teikiama informacija turi būti centralizuota, kad nesukeltų painiavos.

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