Media Credibility and COVID-19 Issues

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Abstract

Today's society is believed to have a lot of access to be able to get the latest news on many things. The speed in receiving new information and awareness of existing issues is increasing. However, there are gaps in the communication process regarding the understanding of news especially in recent issues of COVID-19. This paper discusses the news-find-me perspective in understanding the social process of society to absorb and interpret COVID-19 news in Indonesia. Using a semi-structured interview and focus group discussion while highlighting Theory Reasoned Action, this rare research design and method is stressing on measuring intentions and behaviour towards informants' perspective in potraying COVID-19. This study shows how both informants who access COVID-19 news everyday and one who is very rarely access COVID-19 news have the same doubts in media credibility on how they report the news and the data. As Previous research has found that the more a news is accessed, the higher the level of public trust in the information reported. But nowadays this has shifted to high ratings of news does not mean that the public trusts the information reported. Subsequently, the different way of behaving yet the same reason of doubts can lead to suggestions on how to make the media present news that is make people aware and take COVID-19 more seriously

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1. INTRODUCTION

Vigilance regarding the COVID-19 issue cannot be separated from the role of the media in reporting the latest situation regarding this matter. Today's society is believed to have more access to be able to get the latest news on many things. However, not all people have the mindset to take COVID-19 seriously or even do not believe in the truth of a news program from a media. According to Ardèvol- Abreu & Gil de Zúñiga (2017) people who do not trust the media will be less aware of and knowledgeable in a recent issue.

The trust of the people who do not trust the media is partly determined by the credibility of the media. Johnson & Kaye (1998) conducted a study on the credibility of the media in gaining public trust and found that 56 percent of people stated that the most accurate news today

came from the internet compared to newspapers or television news programs. Meanwhile 22 percent said that anything on the internet cannot be trusted.

Many studies have described the credibility of news in the media in the form of television, newspapers and the internet (Johnson & Kaye, 1998; Spiro Kiousis, 2001; Ardèvol-Abreu & Gil de Zúñiga, 2017). Spiro Kiousis (2001) found that there is a correlation between the behavior taken and the credibility of a media. Through Theory Reasoned Action, this paper will discuss the behavior of 2 informants regarding fears, behavior, and intention in accessing COVID-19 news to explain the correlation between COVID-19 and the behavior decisions taken.

Through Ardèvol-Abreu & Gil de Zúñiga (2017) it is explained that there is a correlation regarding social habits in capturing news which is called news-find-me. The news-find-me perspective is a definition for individuals who feel they are not actively looking for news to find out about the latest issues. And when they read news, it does not mean that they are interested in the news, but because they get the news through the internet system or their peers.

Based on the description of the results of the research above, this paper will attempt to understand the community's process of trusting the media which is associated with the increasing issue and the increasing number of COVID-19 cases in Indonesia. Based on 12 August 2020, the number of COVID-19 cases in Indonesia reached 130,718, with a total of 85,798 who had recovered and 5,903 who had died (Suratnoaji & Arianto, 2020). Through Suratnoaji & Arianto's research, it was found that public opinion regarding the COVID-19 case in Indonesia was that only 32.3% of the people reacted negatively & positively to the lockdown policy or Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB) through social media Twitter. Meanwhile, 67.7% were categorized as people who were neutral regarding the PSBB policy. According to Aisenberg & Henik (2012) being neutral affects cognitive awareness not to act and control a situation which can then be interpreted that 67.7% do not pay special attention in cases of COVID-19 through PSBB.

Based on existing research, there is a gap regarding the relationship between the public in interpreting, believing, and understanding news in the media regarding COVID-19. This paper will describe the effect of the news-find-me perspective on the credibility of the media in influencing the public to understand the COVID-19 case.

2. .RESEARCH METHODS

Semi-structured interviews in a focus group discussion were chosen as the methodology for this study based on previous research recommendations for using Theory Reasoned Action with qualitative methodology (Smith & Bidle, 1999). This study uses only 2 informants based on research conducted by Karnowski (2017) regarding news-sharing using TRA that further

research can focus on two aspects of informants: 1) informants with high frequency accessing COVID-19 news, 2) informants with frequency very low in accessing COVID-19 news. Informant 1 accesses news with a minimum frequency of 3 days to every day of the week to read COVID-19 news. Meanwhile, informant 2 accessed news only when it was needed for aspects of work as a researcher.

Data analysis based on the results of the conversation from the focus group discussion will be displayed and explained based on TRA and discuss conclusions about news-find-me behavior with several conversation excerpts uttered by the informants in answering the questions given.

3. DISCUSSION

Informant 1: "Every day I always look for news about COVID-19. But I always open a lot of news to compare. Sometimes I am skeptical about data from the government, that's why I need to compare the news "

Media credibility has long been a subject of discussion in academic research. Rimmer & Weaver (1987) defines media credibility as something that is trustworthy, impartial, fully and accurately described. Wanta & Hu (1994) explain in their research a model of individual understanding of media credibility which can be described in the following sections

Individuals perceive media to be highly credible

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Rely on media for information

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Individuals develop their opinion

Wanta & Hu explained that when individuals feel that a media has credibility and reliable news insurance and they need to dig up information on important issues, then the dependence on accessing the media will be even higher. Then they will form their opinion without any suspicion about the agenda-setting element in the story. The following patterns apply to newspaper and television media.

Informant 1: I see that the media is now a lot of opposition and critical of the government, such as CNN, example, this is an opinion, because many of the headlines are provocative. So I really like to compare news, I don't want to be fooled by the media.

However, in previous research, Rimmer & Weaver has explained that daily newspaper agencies do not necessarily increase the number of readers by increasing the credibility of the news provided. However, television has a different pattern, the increasing number of viewers of certain news programs will increase the level of credibility of the television news program. In

this case, it can be seen that the pattern of media credibility basically depends on the public's interest in a particular topic.

Individuals perceive media to be highly credible

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Rely on media for information

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Individuals develop their opinion

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Media credibility is replaced by public opinion

Public opinion has now become a media transmission where news will transit before it is finally received by the receiver. In a recent study, Ardèvol-Abreu & Gil de Zúñiga (2017) explained that with the wide access to news circulation, the public considers that they do not need to be active in looking for news. There is a group of individuals who hold a news-find-me perspective, that is, a group that feels there is no additional benefit from watching television, reading newspapers or listening to the radio because they feel they already quite understand what is happening (Knobloch-Westerwick et al, 2005). People with a news-find-me view will prefer to have discussions with peers, family, or news advertisements from the internet that they accidentally come across. They do not claim to be someone who avoids the news, but rather the understanding that they have gotten enough news through the results of interpersonal interactions.

With this perception, it can be seen that a shift in the credibility of a media falls on peers or opinion leaders, someone whose opinion is greatly heard. According to Katz & Lazarsfeld (1966), some individuals who really like news and do not adopt a news-find-me perspective will spread their opinions to their peers about the news they get with the aim of persuading their opinions to be accepted by their peers. The current phenomenon, many people assume they will get the latest or trending news through social media Twitter, which contains more public opinion than trusted news. Through the thinking of previous research, it can be said that there has been a shift in media credibility which is now being replaced by public opinion.

According to Glynn & Huge (2008) public opinion is a natural thing that occurs among the public and has an influence on the image of the media and the conversations that are warmly discussed by the public. But there are two arguments about public opinion, Habermas (1989) in line with Glynn & Huge's thinking that public opinion is natural, rational and based only on information exchange in the process of interpersonal interaction. People are also considered to have the freedom to believe the news they get or even elaborate on their opinion on an issue.

While another opinion that opposes Habermas's argument, Noelle- Neumann (1993) argues that public opinion is a "social control" with the habit of people getting sources from the media, so the media has the power to control issues circulating in an exchange of opinions that occur in an interaction. social. This is what Noelle-Neumann calls the Spiral of Silence theory. The theory discusses the power of the media to expose news continuously so that news that is minority will get less attention. This causes a social phenomenon that when someone voices their opinion on issues that are minority in nature, it will cause the individual's fear of getting social exclusion.

Although the two views on public opinion have opposite sides, Glynn & Huge argues that the two things have the same deep position, because basically humans are connected to their social environment through social interactions by bringing the things they get from the media. It can be concluded that public opinion basically creates "social rules" regarding matters and instructions about what is appropriate and inappropriate to do in a particular situation.

Individuals perceive media to be highly credible

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Rely on media for information

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Individuals develop their opinion

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Media credibility is replaced by public opinion

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Public opinion creates guidance to what is and is not acceptable for given situation

Through the thought chart above, it can be seen that there has been a change in the definition of the social environment regarding media credibility. Previously, in the era of conventional media, the assessment of media credibility was seen from the rating or the number of viewers who saw and read, while in the era of "new media", there was a shift in the definition that media credibility fell in the hands of public opinion.

4. CONCLUSION

In addition to social patterns in reducing the activity of looking for news about COVID-19, the shift in media credibility as a place that was previously relied on to get the latest news has now shifted to relying more on information from peers or sharing news disseminated through social media in their social environment. This of course still controls the social environment to apply things that are generally applied in the social environment, such as the use of masks and the application of social distancing. Even though someone is not active in seeking news about COVID-19 and is neutral on the issue, basic things such as the use of masks and

social distancing will still be carried out because of the strong public opinion regarding the recommendation to use masks and the power of public opinion that has the character of social control.

It's just that the ratio of someone who is active in looking for COVID-19 news and someone who is neutral will be different. This can also be material for further research, but it can be concluded in plain view that people who are neutral and have a news-find-me perspective will find it easier to do things that are considered harmless, such as going out of the house for every purpose, holding their face without washing. hands, not applying social distancing and so on. Then compared to people who are actively looking for news will be more careful in acting. This is a simple pattern that causes the media to continue to report the number of COVID-19 cases in Indonesia every day.

Through the discussion in this paper, there are several things that can be done both from the practical and academic aspects of implementation. Practically, several things can be done to increase public awareness on the issue of COVID- 19, especially for people who tend to have a news-find-me perspective. First, news broadcasting institutions can mobilize their social media by using Artificial Intelligence technology which is currently widely used to target advertisements on social media to get the right target segment. It is felt that this can be used by news media in reporting the latest issues for people with a news-find-me perspective

The second thing that can be done practically is by means of the government or from a small scale such as the head of the RT can form not only a COVID-19 task force but also opinion leader groups from the surrounding social environment to continue to voice important things that must be done to prevent infection. COVID-19 virus. In addition to voicing the dangers of COVID-19, opinion leaders in general can change the message to be more positive in nature in order

to balance the feeling of excessive worry which is also one of the main reasons people with a news-find-me perspective do not access COVID-19 news. actively. Positive messages can contain the importance of maintaining lung health, or the benefits of using hand-sanitizers and the health effects on the body when away from bacteria.

Academically, there are many aspects that become gaps to be researched in future research. Like how the public's stigma with a news-find-me perspective regarding COVID-19, their daily patterns and the effects it causes. In addition, the distribution of age, gender, level of education, and location of domicile can be one thing to consider in sampling in future studies so that behavior patterns can be distinguished based on these factors. Future research can use quantitative data processing to get a more detailed description of society with a news-find-me perspective in processing the COVID-19 issue.

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