

Level of Public Acceptance of Covid-19 Information in Batu Bara Regency of North Sumatra

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ABSTRACT. The Covid-19 pandemic has had a far-reaching impact on people's lives, causing stagnation, recession or depression in the economic, education and other sectors. Public trust must be built and maintained so that there is no panic in the midst of a pandemic situation. In addition, communication must also run simultaneously using a mix of face-to-face communication, group communication, mass communication and digital communication. The goal is that public communication can take place optimally in multicultural communities in Batu Bara Regency. This study used a quantitative descriptive method with a population of 410,678 people and a sample of 130 people taken by stratified random sampling. Data collection techniques through the dissemination of questionnaires and interviews. The results showed that the level of public trust was quite high in the Covid-19 information provided in villages, sub-districts and sub-districts. Communication through religious activities is considered the most effective in the delivery of Covid-19 information. The level of community satisfaction in handling Covid-19 is in the good category. The use of banners, posters and social media such as Facebook is in great demand by the public so that it can be maximized as Covid-19 information. However, there are several things that need to be addressed, namely access to information on the Coal website about Covid-19 still needs to be increased in frequency, Radio and television are not effective media for the public about Covid-19 information.

KEYWORDS : Public Acceptance, Information about Covid-19, Batubara Regency, North Sumatra

1 INTRODUCTION

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a far-reaching impact on the lives of the global community. Covid-19 causes stagnation, recession or depression in the economic sector (Mohammad Ali et al., 2021). Public trust must be built and maintained so that there is no panic in the community. In addition, communication must be built on an ongoing basis so that Information and Education Communication (IEC) can take place optimally in a multicultural society (Lubis, 2020: 9).

Data findings show that the Central Government's Policy with Local Governments has not worked well, and even tends to disharmonize policies (Ariyanto, 2020, p. 40; Chadijah et al., 2020, p. 227; Juaningsih et al., 2020, p. 510). The authority in making policies becomes a monopoly of the central government, in terms of local governments is the spearhead in handling the Covid-19 pandemic (Ramadhan, 2020). Local governments cannot make their own decisions regarding policies for handling Covid-19 and rely on central government decisions (Ariyanto, 2020, p. 40; Fatchan et al., 2020; Febiana, 2021, p. 100).

One example in handling the Covid 19 national disaster, the central government has full responsibility and requires full support from local governments (Chadijah et al., 2020; Furqon & Mulyadi, 2020). The problem is, not all regions have adequate infrastructure in implementing existing policies. Local governments need readiness for public service capacity, availability of easily accessible facilities and infrastructure and readiness in socio-political management (Mawardi, 2020 in Aziz & Wicaksono, 2020). Crisis communication situations like this, government public communication has an impact in order to be able to maintain a balance of information to the public, manage risks and maintain public trust (Goeritman, 2021, p. 2)

The rationale above, the researcher examined the level of public acceptance of Covid 19 information in Batubara Regency. The reason is that Batu Bara is a regency that has responded quickly in tackling Covid-19 since 2020, such as improving hospital facilities, the availability of PCR Laboratory cars, providing social assistance quickly, precisely and evenly, as well as the intensive implementation of vaccinations carried out through communication that reaches communities in 12 districts with a population of 410,678 people (Batu Bara Regency in numbers, 2020).

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Public communication is the delivery of messages about policies from one source (government) to the recipient (community) to produce a common meaning (Susanto, 2013 in Febiana, 2021). Goeritman (2021), defines public communication as a communication strategy and activity aimed at the target audience, with the aim of providing information and increasing awareness and influencing attitudes or behaviors. Judy Pearson & Paul Nelson (in S. A. E. Dewi, 2021) define public communication as the process of using messages to create common meaning in situations where the source transforms the message to the recipient and then gives feedback in the form of oral and written messages or non-verbal communication.

Aritonang (2011) in his paper 'Communication Policy in Indonesia: An Overview of the Implementation of Law No. 14 of 2008 concerning Public Information Disclosure,' explained that communication policy has at least three (3) important parts, namely context, domain and paradigm. Context means the interrelationship of a communication policy with something that surrounds itself such as political economy or the politics of communication. The domain of communication policy means the content of values contained in a communication policy such as globalization or the global economy. Meanwhile, the paradigm is more of a framework of ideals that make the purpose of the communication policy. Its main objective is to provide information to the audience and increase awareness that will influence attitudes or even behaviors.

Rogers (in Cangara, 2017) reinforces that communication strategies are designs built to change human behavior through the transfer of new ideas. Middleton further (in Cangara, 2017) explained that the success of a communication strategy requires the support of all elements of communication such as communicators, messages, media, communicants in achieving optimal communication goals. In addition, social media and conventional media play an important role as control over policies carried out by the government to the public in order to provide a sense of calm (Sulistiyowati & Hasanah, 2021, p. 201).

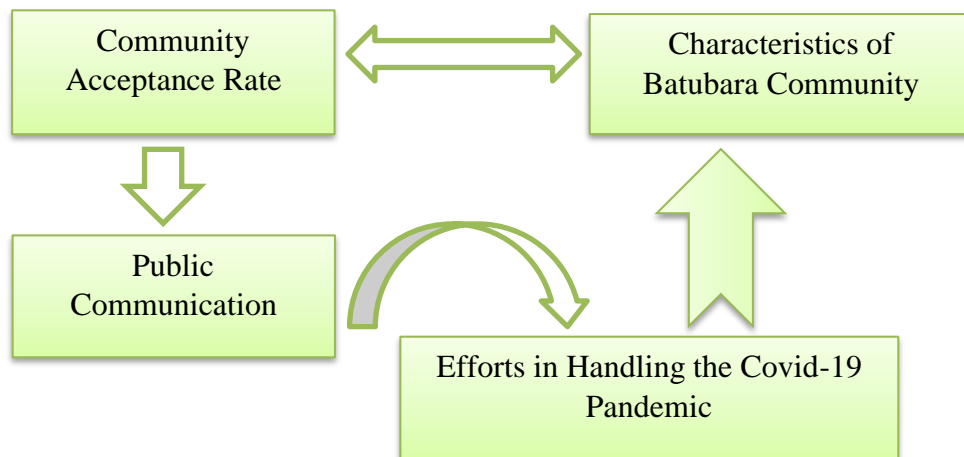


Figure 1: Concept of thinking

3 RESEARCH METHODS

The research method used is quantitative with an analytical descriptive approach. The population is a community in Batubara Regency which amounts to 410,678 people from 12 districts (Coal Regency Data, 2020). The sample was taken using the Taro Yamane Formula, with a precision of 10% and a confidence level of 90% (Sugiyono, 2013), a research sample of 130 people was obtained. Stratified Random Sampling Sampling Technique (Darmawan, 2013: 147). The sample data as seen in table 1 below.

Table 1. Research Samples

District	Population	Sampling	Number of samples in each district
Sei Balai	29541	$\frac{29541 \times 130}{410678}$	9
Tanjung Tiram	35662	$\frac{35662 \times 130}{410678}$	11
Nibung Hangus	31206	$\frac{31206 \times 130}{410678}$	10
Talawi	31912	$\frac{31912 \times 130}{410678}$	10
Datuk Tanah Datar	26903	$\frac{26903 \times 130}{410678}$	9
Lima Puluh	35623	$\frac{35623 \times 130}{410678}$	11
Lima Puluh Pesisir	34921	$\frac{34921 \times 130}{410678}$	11
Datuk Lima Puluh	24432	$\frac{24432 \times 130}{410678}$	8
Air Putih	51959	$\frac{51959 \times 130}{410678}$	16
Sei Suka	33648	$\frac{33648 \times 130}{410678}$	11
Laut Tador	21747	$\frac{21747 \times 130}{410678}$	7
Medang Deras	53124	$\frac{53124 \times 130}{410678}$	17
Total	410.678	410678	130

Data collection techniques through the dissemination of questionnaires directly to selected respondents and interviews to explore open-ended questions asked by researchers. Analyze data by presenting a single table, and a cross table. Validity Test to measure research instruments and rehabilitation of data consistency degrees through the SPSS 12 program.

4 DISCUSSION

The distribution of questionnaires from 17 closed and open questions concerns three aspects, namely: 1) Local Government Policies in Handling Covid-19, 2) The Role of Opinion Leaders and 3) The Use of Media / Social Networks. More clearly can be seen below.

(1) Government Policy in Handling Covid-19

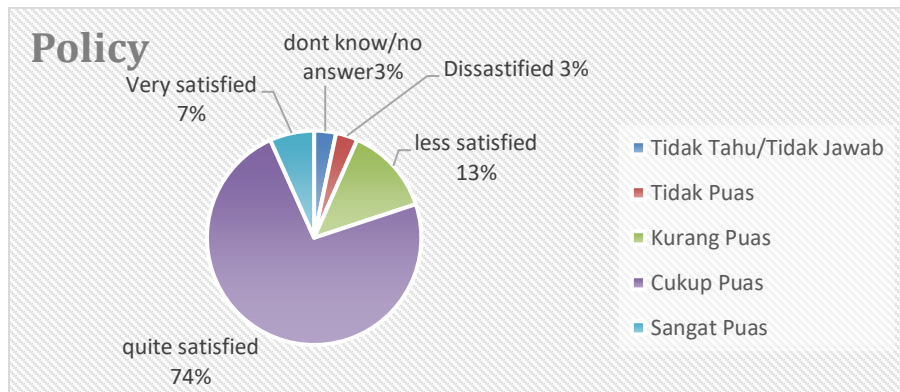


Figure 2. Government policy in Handling Covid-19

From the data above, it can be seen that the level of public satisfaction with various policies implemented by the Coal Regency Government in dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic with a scale assessment of 5, is still at level 4, which is quite satisfied as much as 73.3% and level 5, very satisfied as much as 6.7%. Then level 3 is dissatisfied as much as 13.3% and level 2 dissatisfied as much as 3.3%. This of course still needs to be the attention of the Coal Regency Government to re-evaluate all the policies that have been set in dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic. Although overall the data can be said that the implementation of public policies related to handling the Covid-19 pandemic has been good.

2) The Role of Opinion Leaders

Opinion leaders such as religious leaders and community leaders have a place in the hearts of the people. They are an extension of the government in disseminating information about covid-19 and its handling, including inviting people to want to be vaccinated. In addition, the level of public satisfaction with Covid 19 information services from open questions is as follows:

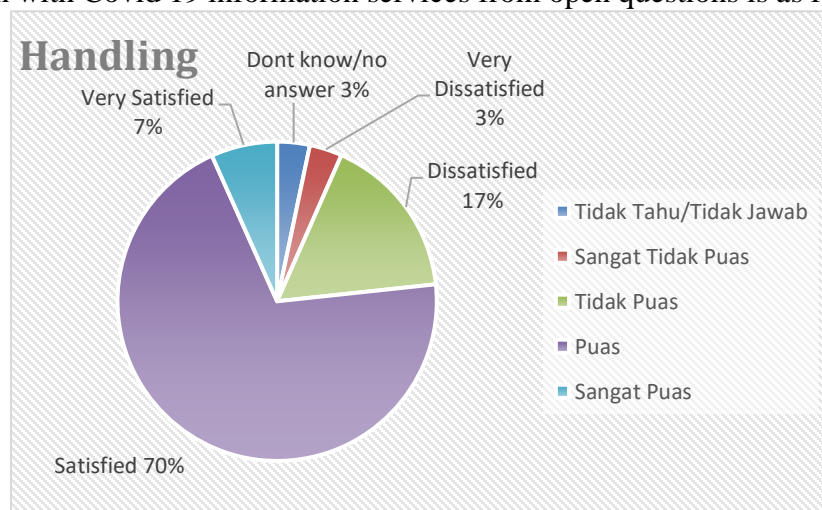


Figure 3. Level of public satisfaction

From the data above, it is known that the level of public satisfaction with the handling of the Covid-19 pandemic carried out by the Coal Regency Government on a scale of 5, is at level 4,

namely satisfied as much as 70% and level 3, which is dissatisfied as much as 16.7%. Thus, it can be said that the handling of the Covid-19 pandemic carried out by the Coal Regency Government is quite good, it's just that it needs to be maximized even more by looking at obstacles in the field such as roads that need to be repaired so that it makes it easier to reach districts that are far from city regencies such as Fifty Coastal Districts, Tanjung Tiram, Datuk Tanah Datar, Talawi and others.

Some of the obstacles in service felt by the community are as follows:

1. Lack of information about Covid-19 at the Village and Village levels, while public curiosity is quite high for Covid-19 information. However, this can be overcome by the role of religious figures (ustad) who are more trusted in providing information about Covid-19 and how to prevent it in Islamic law such as paying attention to the right way of tangible, healthy living behavior, a lot of friendship, praying to be shunned from Covid-19 and filling time at home with useful things.
2. The information services available on the Batu Bara website related to Covid-19 have not been maximized so that the public does not get updated information from the website.
3. The community needs to be empowered to be aware and willing to comply with health protocols, the use of masks, the creation of PPKM posts in an effort to reduce people's travel mobility during the pandemic so that the spread of Covid-19 does not spread widely.

3). Use of Social Media and Mass Media

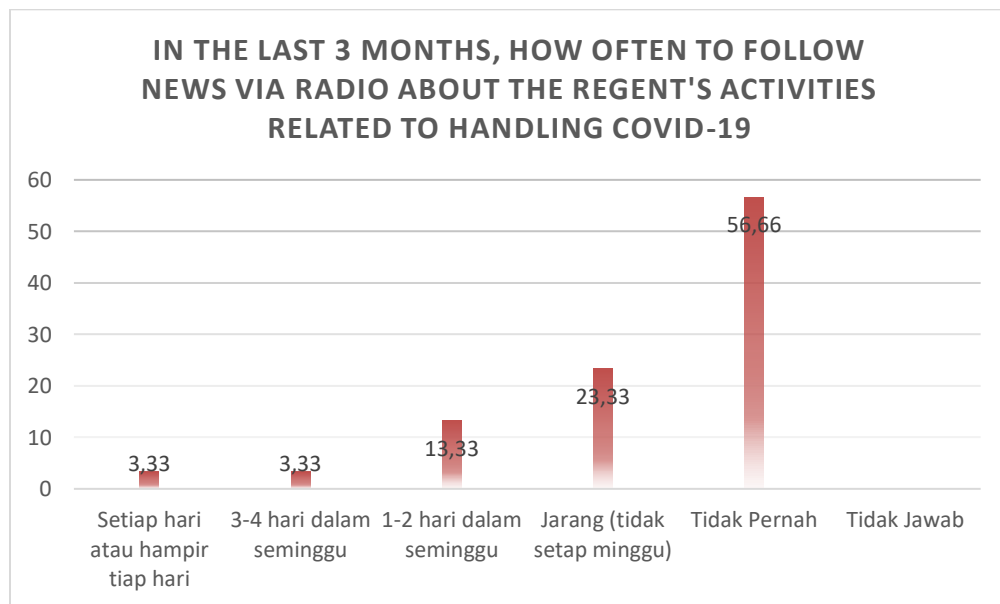


Figure 4. Use of radio to get news Covid-19

From the table data above, it can be seen that the people of Batu Bara district are not radio connoisseurs. In fact, they have never heard of radio again, meaning that radio is not an effective medium used by the public relations of the Coal Regency Government to provide information related to Covid-19

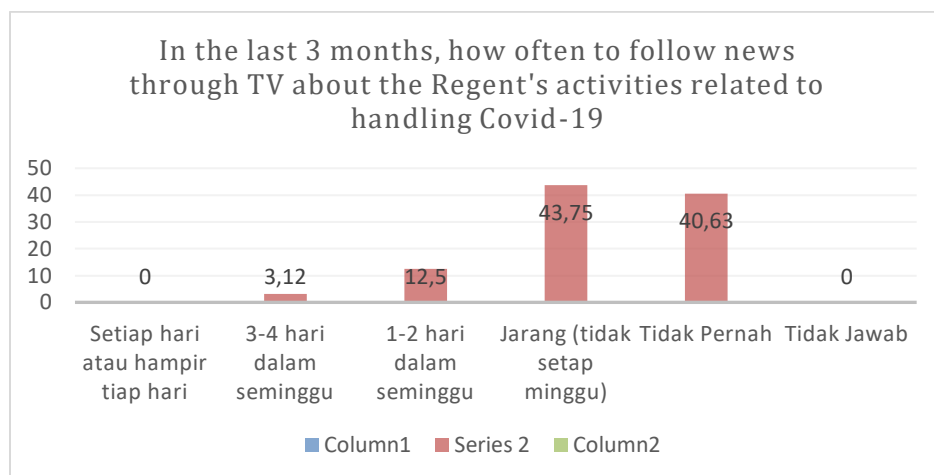


Figure 5. Use of television to get news Covid-19

From the table data above, it can be seen that television is not used as the main media by the public in seeking information about Covid-19. This also provides input for the Coal Regency Government Public Relations to choose other alternative media in informing Covid-19. The TV stations that are often watched are as follows:

Table 2. Percentage of TV station usage

No	Stasiun TV	Frekuensi	Persentase
1	TVRI	22	17,24
2	RCTI	-	-
3	SCTV	18	13,8
4	GLOBAL TV	-	-
5	MNC TV	-	-
6	TRANS TV	-	-
7	INDOSIAR	18	13,8
8	TRANS 7	-	-
9	METRO TV	9	6,89
10	AN TV	-	-
11	TV ONE	13	10,34
12	KOMPAS TV	-	-
13	RTV	-	-
99	Lainnya, sebutkan..		
	iNews TV	5	3,4 %
	Tidak ada	45	34,4%
	TOTAL	130	100 %

The data above shows that although television is not the main medium to meet the information needs of Covid-19, TVRI television stations can be used as an alternative TV choice

to provide information related to Covid-19 because there are still residents who watch TVRI, even though the number is only 17.24%.

(4). Frequent Levels of Accessing the Internet

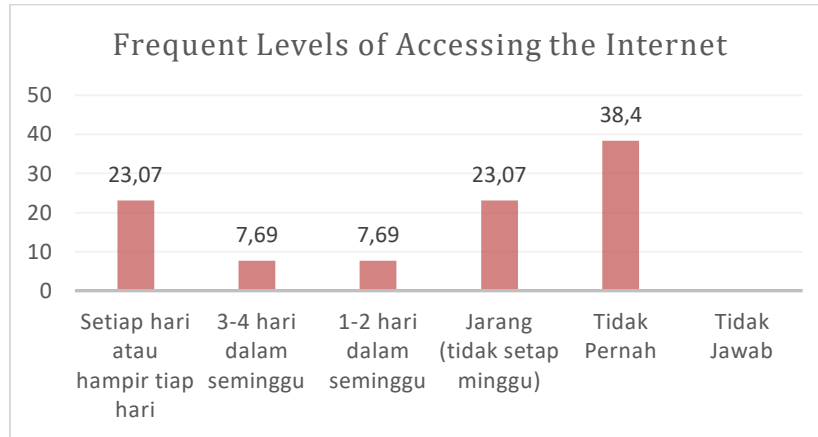


Figure 6. Frequent of accessing internet

It can be seen that there are approximately 50% of the people of Batu Bara Regency who access the internet with various variations in usage frequency. Thus, the Coal Government through its public relations must further maximize the website or social media in providing covid-19 information to the public. In addition, through banners, billboards, posters, or flyers that are distributed to the community is an effective means for the community because the geographical location and coal area are not the same and not all can be reached by cable networks.

Furthermore, in the ownership of accounts on social media as follows:

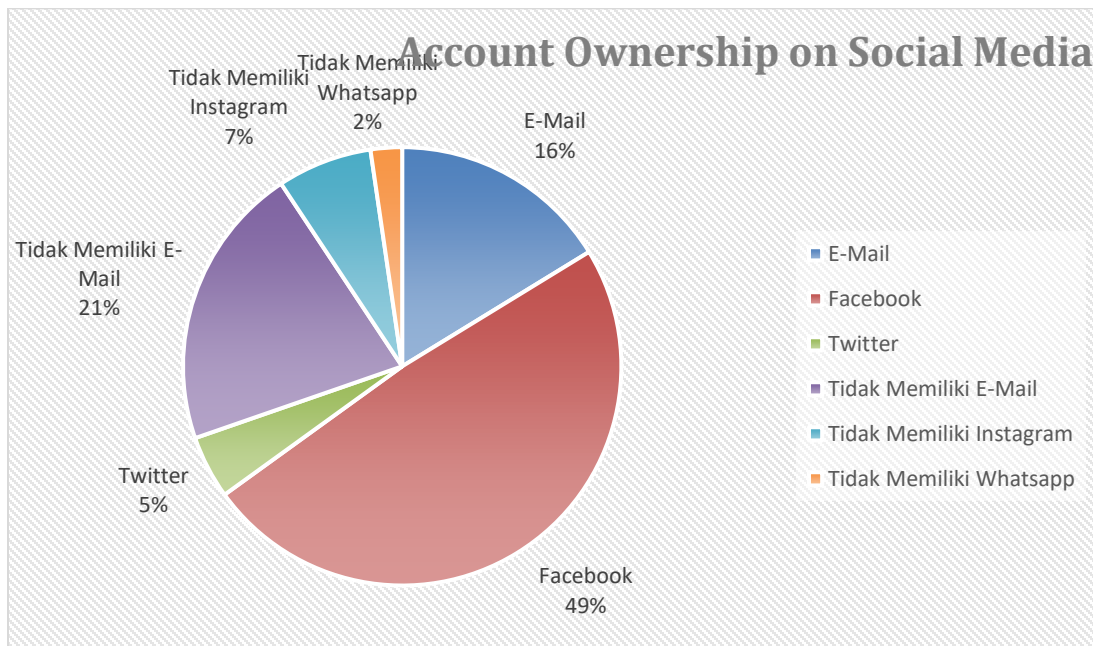


Figure 7. Percentage of account ownership on social media

From the data above, it can be seen that Facebook social media is the most owned and in demand by the people of Batu Bara Regency. How to use it is easy, many friends and all the information can be known. Thus, the Coal Government through its Public Relations can maximize facebook social media as information about Covid-19.

5 CONCLUSION

The challenge faced by the Coal Government in handling the Covid-19 pandemic is the vast area of the Coal Regency to remote villages, pesisir and the sea, making information not reach the community evenly. The role of opinion leaders such as religious leaders and community leaders is very helpful for the Coal regional government as an extension of covid-19 information on communities at the sub-district, sub-district and village levels that are far from reach. In addition, the role of print media such as banners, billboards, posters, fliers is very helpful in covid-19 information compared to radio and television. Meanwhile, the social media that is very interested in the public about covid-19 information is Facebook because generally people have account facebook.

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