COMMUNICATIVE ACTIONS OF THE INDONESIAN GOVERNMENT DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN ONLINE MEDIA

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
	This study focuses on the government's communicative actions in public sphere during the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic. The government's steps have seen to be experiencing inconsistency, ambiguity, and counter productiveness in handling the Covid-19 pandemic issue. The material objects in this study are government statements quoted by three online mass media, namely kompas.com, tribunnews.com, and detik.com, which were published from March to May 2020. There were twelve selected media articles from these media. The text was analyzed using critical discourse analysis. This research uses a qualitative approach with a critical paradigm. The research data is processed using Habermas' communicative action theory where the validity of a communication is tested through 4 validity claims, such as truth, sincerity, comprehensibility, and legitimacy. The results of the study explained that from 12 news containing 31 government statements, found 10 confusing statements, 6 erroneous statements, 7 false impressions and 8 illegitimacy and inaccuracies. This shows an indication of the government's inability to act communicatively, especially in the aspect of comprehensiility claims that lead to information distortion. The government statements use a lot of jargon and terms that are not well defined, lead to misinformation.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Covid-19 virus has become a disaster for the whole world that could never have been predicted before. This virus has become a pandemic that paralyzes various areas of community activity, especially the economic sector, both for the upper and middle classes, and especially for the lower economic classes. Unemployment is increasing as many business activities are forced to stop. This virus has become an invisibl enemy that attacks humans all over the world.

The Indonesian government has made various efforts to minimize and suppress the spread of the virus, such as implementing large-scale social restrictions, limiting community activity, limiting religious worship activities, stopping all direct teaching, and even prohibiting people from returning to their hometowns during holiday celebrations. Reports regarding the government's handling of this outbreak have been widely reported in various

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media, from print, radio, electronic media to social media. The media was filled with so much information about Covid-19 from various sources that people found it difficult to differentiate between true news and hoax news.

In various reports in the media, the President of Indonesia, Jokowi, asked all Indonesian people to remain calm. However, the government did not provide sufficient information to deal with the outbreak. In practice, there is confusion in coordination between government agencies, which results in confusion in information to the public. The public is presented with information that seems poorly coordinated and sometimes contradictory between spokespersons representing the government in the media. The presentation of information regarding the dangers of Covid-19 seem less serious, as this can be seen from the inconsistent delivery of information and controversial statements from government officials. This causes low public trust in the Government regarding the seriousness of handling this outbreak, which in the end can result in delays in the process of handling this health crisis.

Kompas.com reported research by the Institute for Research, Education, Economic and Social Information (LP3ES) on the political communication of President Joko Widodo's cabinet during the Covid-19 pandemic. The Director of the Center for Media and Democracy LP3ES, Wijayanto, stated that during the period of January 1 to April 5, 2020, 37 government statements were discovered to be blunders or communication errors related to the Corona virus [1]. Wijayanto further stated that the government, starting from the pre-crisis phase, was considered 'not serious, underestimated, and even rejected the possibility of a Corona virus cases in Indonesia' [1].

The only communication channel used by the government when the pandemic occurred was the mass media. With so many statements and information confusing the public, the result is excessive fear, anxiety and panic in the community which leads to the phenomenon of panic buying [2]. This panic buying behavior is carried out by buying food, vitamins, milk, masks and disinfectants or anything related to this outbreak in large quantities to anticipate the uncertainty of the situation that occurs due to a crisis or disaster. It is indicated that this happened because of the way the government carried out public communications when facing the Covid-19 health crisis.

The role of the media here is very important to provide information that is really needed by the public. But unfortunately, the information in the media at that time was mostly about outbreaks related to political power. The real enemy is the virus itself, and the media must be able to provide in-depth information about the virus. Garnett and Kouzmin [3] stated that the media in principle can help frame a crisis, educate the public and report the effectiveness of the crisis response itself. However, the media can also provide distorted and sensational information, especially if there is a lack of clarity, consistency and accuracy of information from news leaders or sources [3].

The construction of a person's words and language is actually inseparable from the construction of existing reality. Communication confusion that occurs in emergency or crisis situation is a reflection of the poor performance of government agencies due to a lack of good political communication. Government officials are public figures who are role models for society in thinking and acting. In this case, the public also receives confusing information which can give rise to distrust of the government.

With the many problems caused by the government's communication patterns in dealing with the Covid-19 outbreak, this research will examine communication inconsistencies that occur in the meaning and context of language choices used by government officials through online media. Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action (TCA) in this research is used as a basic framework for analysis in identifying statements based on validity claims in government social responsibility that give rise to polemics in news interpretation. This is used to identify systematic communication distortions regarding government statements in media coverage. To evaluate the language and media discourse, this research applies Habermas's critical discourse analysis (CDA) to reveal how language is used by the government to maintain and reflect social relations of power, domination and ideology in the public sphere, as CDA concerns with relations of power and inequality in language [4].

Habermas's theory of communicative action rests on the idea that social order ultimately depends on the capacity of actors to recognize the intersubjective validity of the various claims on which social cooperation is based, which means it depends on communicative competence. This theory is used to understand human interaction at an ethical level where systematic distortions and violations of communication within a discource can be revealed (Forchtner; Stahl cited in Albertus and Makoza [5]). Coordination through language requires speakers to take a practical stance to achieve mutual understanding or consensus which is the inherent goal of speech [6]. When mutual understanding is achieved, a practical attitude is achieved, then communicative action can be taken, so that Habermas in this case emphasizes the concept of practical ratio into the concept of communicative ratio.

The basis of the theory of communicative action is the three-world concept in understanding reality which is closely interrelated, namely: the objective world (related to facts that are in universal truth), the subjective world (feelings and hopes related to the individual's internal beliefs), and the social wold associated with norms and values that then determine actions [7]. From these three concepts a validity claim is then formed. Habermas in his book, *Communication and Evolution of Society*, [8] divides speech into validity claims in the table below:

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Tabel 1: Habermas Validity Claims (1979)

Domains of Reality	Modes of Communication: Basic Attitudes	Validity Claims	General Functions of Speech
"The" World of External Nature	Cognitive: Objectivating Attitude	Truth	Representation of Facts
"Our" World of Society	Interactive: Conformative Attitude	Rightness	Establishment of Legitimate Interpersonal Relations
"My" World of Internal Nature	Expressive: Expressive Attitude	Truthfulness	Disclosure of Speaker's Subjectivity
Language	_____	Comprehensibility	_____

In describing the terminology of validity claims, Habermas uses various terms. In *Communication and Evolution of Society* [8] the four validity claims are translated as truth, rightness, truthfulness, and comprehensibility. In applying Habermas's Communicative Action theory, Cukier et.al [9] and Ngwenyama and Lee [7] summarize validity claims and text dimensions referring to the framework which can be seen in the table below. This research follows this table to see the communication distortions that occur in a discourse and what their implications are.

Tabel 2: Summary of Validity Claims and Corresponding Discourse Dimensions
Adopted from Cukier et.al [9]

Validity Claim	Result	Distortion	Speech Dimensions
The content of the presuppositions of what is said be factual or true.	Truth	Misrepresentation	Argumentation and evidence
The speaker is honest (or sincere) in what she says.	Sincerity	False assurance	Metaphors and connotative words
What is said is linguistically intelligible and compehensible.	Clarity	Confusion	Rhetoric and semantic rules
What the speaker says (and hence does) is right or appropriate in the light of existing norms or values.	Legitimacy	Illegitimacy	Use of experts

In explaining truth validity claims, Habermas [10] explains that truth refers to correct communication and providing sufficient information that supports a statement or reasoning in a message. A truth claim refers to the aspect of truth or validity of an argument that is made regardless of the speaker's intentions, motives, and agenda. In this validity claim, what is tested are the facts presented in the message, including untrue statements and statements without evidence. As a cognitive claim, this claim is a claim related to the objective world and uses constative speech acts. Truth is rooted in positivist philosophy where a single reality exists and can be measured objectively (Borsboom and Markus cited in Chigona et al [4]).

The validity claims of truthfulness according to Habermas [8] is translated into sincerity claims. Sincerity here refers to the intent of the message addressed to the recipient and how the intent of the message can influence their emotional response. This means that this claim is aimed at the characteristics of the message creator, namely that the message can reflect their emotions, values, opinions and hopes which are expressed seriously and honestly. The message conveyed may seem honest, but the intent of the message may not be sincere, for example the use of jargon and metaphors that are intended to influence the audience or recipient of the message [5].

Habermas [10] explains that comprehensibility or clarity validity claims is related to the clarity of communication and the use of language that is understood by the actors. In other words, whether the communication is comprehensible, reasonable, clear and complete. Therefore, communication content must contain terms that are mutually understandable and not use complicated language or jargon. In this case, word construction is used to provide as clear information as possible to the public, not used otherwise, with the aim of impressing the public [4].

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The validity claims of rightness is an agreement regarding the implementation of norms in the social world or what is called the legitimacy of interpersonal relationship. This relates to the opportunity for those involved in a discourse to be heard and that a message is balanced and not biased [10]. The parties involved in the discourse can interact with each other to convey their opinions or thoughts to each other in an effort to convince other parties so as to produce a joint consensus. In this case, legitimacy can be tested by looking at the message, whether the message has several points of view from the parties concerned [4].

2.   RESEARCH METHOD

This study used a qualitative research approach and applied Habermasian critical discourse analysis to highlight several online media news using Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action. In this research conducts library research as a study method in carrying out interpretive practices. In this research, four claims from Habermas's theory of communicative action are applied to reveal communication distortions that occur in government statements reported on three online media in a limited period.

The news used was selected purposively on Kompas.com, Tribunnews.com, and Detik.com for the period of March to May 2020. The choice of media was based on a survey conducted by Multimedia Nusantara University research team for the Press Council regarding the online media that were most frequently used as references in reporting on Covid-19 [11]. The keywords used were: "government statement about Covid-19 March-May 2020" and then entered in the search column for the three media in question. The news used as a sample is limited to 12 news stories which are considered representative of the three media. Based on previous studies, this number was mentioned by Chigona et.al [4] is quite representative in research related to discourse. Then, the news that appears from the three media will then be reduced based on the similarity of the news.

This research will focus on news that reviews government statements regarding Covid-19, thus news that does not review government statements will be eliminated to maintain the focus of this research. Researchers used deductive analysis by applying themes from Habermas's four theoritical constructs, namely truth, sincerity, comprehensibility, and legitimacy.

3.   RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

By entering the keywords "governement statement regarding Covid-19 March to May 2020" on Kompas.com, Detik.com and Tribunnew.com pages, the most popular 12 news stories were found and sorted which focused on government's statements regarding Covid-19. These articles were then coded from A1 to A12 (see Appendix). Kompas.com summarizes a flashback of controversial statements by officials regarding the Corona virus which makes it easier for the researchers to determine the news. The selected news represents the specificied reporting period, from March to May 2020.

3.1. Validity Claim of Truth

A dialogue certainly aims to get the truth, so aspects of its truth need to be tested. This means questioning the truth of the ideas offered. In this case, the search is focused on the truth of the statement, the idea in question, the goals, and the actions that lead to understanding. Government statements in the media are seen to be whether they are facts, statements supported by evidence or vice versa. Examining statements made by the government through the media means that this research cannot be separated from how the media conveys the news to the public. Whether the media provides evidence to support these claims are also questionable.

This research found that of the 12 news articles, there were 6 news articles with proven claims and 6 news articles with unproven claims. In these 6 news articles, the media supports the evidence related to the government statements so that they fulfill the requirements for truth claims. Such evidence may come from events monitored by the media or evidence supported by other sources. One of the proven claims statements made by Moeldoko (Chief of Presidential Staff) to ask the public to remain calm regarding panic buying, is supported by evidence provided by the media (A6). This statement was supported by the media report regarding the large number of people who go to local markets and supermarkets to buy goods, thus causing long queues. Proven claims can be found in news article A6 to A9, and A 11 to A12.

Unproven claims are key statements that are not supported by evidence or sufficient information in the article. Article A1 to A5, and A10 are considered articles with unproven claims. News articles A1, A2, and A5 are articles about the statement by the Minister of Health, Terawan Agus Putranto. A1 and A2 published on Kompas.com, and A5 on Detik.com. In A1, the article contains 3 statements by Terawan regarding the public's response to the first two Indonesian citizens who were exposed to the Corona virus:

1.   "*Besides, flu is something that usually happens to us, coughs and colds have a higher death rate than Corona, but what makes this, Corona, so extraordinary?*"
2.   Statement about the virus: "…*facing viruses that are actually ordinary*".

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3.   "*I am sure that our national health resilience will be maintained because of our unity together…*".

These three statements are not supported by sufficient evidences and arguments so they can cause confusion among the public. As the Minister of Health, Terawan, in his statement regarding flu, coughs and colds, did not reveal data related to death rates caused by this disease and neither was provided by the media. Statements regarding the Corona virus that are considered normal are also not based on actual facts. This is in contrast to the fact that the Corona virus has emerged since 2019 in China and has claimed many lives. Furthermore, the third statement regarding national health resilience can be maintained with unity does not provide clear facts and arguments about how the unity factor can provide national health security, especially overcoming the spread of the Corona virus. Thus, it can be concluded that these 3 statements are claims without evidence which produce false distortions. This can be seen from the absence of facts and arguments to support these statements. For this reason, A1 does not meet the criteria for a truth claim.

In the next news on Kompas.com (A2), Terawan again gave a statement without evidence, saying: "*This is a happy news. I am happy that the theory is correct that this is a self-limited disease, a disease that will heal itself.*" This statement was related to the recovery of the first three Corona patients and was made when visiting patients in hospital. Regarding the theory of self-limited disease itself, neither Terawan nor the media explained the theory further, resulting in distorted errors that could have fatal consequences. By mentioning a theory, it is appropriate that the theory is also explained further so that it can broaden the reader's knowledge regarding the theory in question. The truth about diseases that can heal themselves is also not presented as a fact in this news, for example whether the patient recovers on his own without the need for medical therapy, or vice versa, requires medical therapy. Thus, this statement can cause confusion for the public so that it does not fulfill the validity claim of truth.

Then, in the A5 article reported by Detik.com, Terawan also gave two statements:

1.   "*I don't think phobias should be brought up too much*".
2.   *"We just have to adapt the healthy living movement, which is enough to prevent the Corona virus from spreading. As long as it (the healthy living movement) continous to be promoted well, it is enough to prevent it*".

This article does not explain the phobia phenomenon that is currently occurring in society, such as the facts about the phobia, the impact of the phobia in question, and so on. According to Terawan, the Corona virus can also be prevented by simply carrying out healthy living movements. This statement is also not supported by sufficient arguments and facts about what is meant by the healthy living movement. How healthy living movements can prevent the Corona virus and what kind of healthy living movements need to be carried out are not explained further. Without facts, this statement can be concluded as a claim without evidence so it does not fulfill the truth claim. Statements without evidence can cause people to be mistaken in dealing with the Corona virus.

News A3 and A4 are about statements by the President of Indonesia, Joko Widodo, as reported by Kompas.com. Jokowi's statements in both articles do not fulfill the truth claim because they do not provide sufficient facts and arguments to explain his statements. In A3 is a review of Jokowi's statement on the Mata Najwa talk show program regarding prohibiting 'going home' (*mudik*) but allowing 'returning home' (*pulang kampung*). In this article there are 3 key Jokowi statements as follows:

1.   Explanation of the difference in the definition of 'going home' (*mudik*) and 'returning home' (*pulang kampung*): "*Yes, 'going home' is on Eid day. Different. To celebrate Eid al-Fitr. If someone 'returning home', they work in Jakarta, but their wife and children are in the village.*"
2.   Statement regarding being allowed to return to their hometown: "*They don't work here. Which is more dangerous? Here, 8-9 people live in the room or they have returned to the village, but there the village has prepared isolation first.*"
3.   Statement about village data regarding isolation program readiness: "*I think now all villages have prepared this isolation for those returning from the village. Which is more dangerous? I think we have to look at the field in more detail. More detailed numbers.*"

Regarding the differences in definitions conveyed by Jokowi regarding 'going home' (*mudik*) and 'returning home' (*pulang kampung*), in this article it cannot be proven, either by Jokowi or Kompas.com, whether these definitions are in accordance with the Indonesian Dictionary or by presenting reviews from grammar experts. This difference in definition can result in a misunderstanding of meaning for the public because the terms 'going home'(*mudik*) and 'returning home' (*pulang kampung*), as known for Indonesians, have had the same meaning so far. Apart from that, Jokowi in this article also does not explain the procedure for distinguishing between people 'going home'(*mudik*) and 'returning home' (*pulang kampung*) so that this statement can be concluded as a statement without facts and intersubjectivity is not achieved.

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3.2. Validity Claim of Sincerity

The validity claim of sincerity looks at whether the speaker is honest or sincere about what is said. The validity test of this claim is whether what the speaker states or the reality is consistent with what is said, so that in this claim the dimensions of speech studied are metaphors and connotative words. The distortion that can occur from the invalidity of this claim is the uncertainty of the guarantee provided or a false assurance.

Of the 12 articles, exaggeration was found in four articles, namely news stories A1 to A4 and suggestive language was found in 5 articles. An exaggeration is a representation of information that is more extreme or dramatic than the actual reality. Suggestive language is language that subtly communicates to the reader the speaker's views without explicitly saying it.

One of exaggeration statement was found on article news A4, when Jokowi said "*…we have to live in peace with Covid-19 for some time to come*". Referring to the article, Jokowi's intention here is to ask the public to be disciplined in complying with health protocols as long as the outbreak persists by living in peace with Covid-19. Jokowi here uses the connotative/metaphorical words 'living in peace', which can mislead the public. Reporting from the Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI online version), making peace means to stop being hostile. This expression contradicts with the fact that the Covid-19 virus is the world enemy that must be fought together. Thus, the statement regarding 'living in peace with Covid-19' does not fulfill the claim of sincerity because it is inconsistent with the reality that the Corona virus is a common enemy in the world that must be fought. Apart from that, the choice of these words is considered to be contrary to the intention conveyed in his statement, which is calling on the public to be disciplined in complying with health protocols. Discipline and peace are two different things. Discipline means obedience, while peace means reconciliation.

The power of suggestive language is often useful to support the positions or arguments of certain powerful groups and, at the same time, undermine and/or marginalize others [12]. Suggestive language that uses position to emphasize the statement, such as "*As the Minister of Health, I only convey an appeal…*" (A1) and the mention of other position of authority, such as the police (A6) are used to support the statement and at the same time avoid possible skepticism and critisicm that may occur afterwards.

Suggestive language is also found in Vice President's statement, Ma'ruf Amin, regarding the government's efforts to tighten entry: "*Basically, we will also tighten the entry of foreign tourists or Indonesian citizens returning from abroad*" (A10). Ma'ruf here does not explicitly explain what is meant by restricting the entry of immigrants. Using the words 'basically' seems to provide an affirmation to influence the public without needing to explain the statement in more detail.

3.3. Validity Claim of Clarity

Clarity or comprehensibility validity claims are related to linguistic clarity, whether what is said can be understood. In this claim, if it is not fulfilled then distortion of confusion will occur. The validity test of this claim is whether the statement through the media is sufficiently understood by looking at the dimensions of rhetorical and semantic rules. This claim is categorized into jargon, undefined words, and defined words. All jargon in media discourse must have clear content, be written in a way to inform and not just to impress the public. Undefined words are terms, both technical and non-technical, that are not defined in the media. In contrast, defined words are terms, both technical and non-technical, that are defined in the media.

The Minister of Health, Terawan Agus Putranto, in his statements (A1, A2, A5) often uses jargon such as: "*mutual encouragement, compassion, care, horror, excitement, self-limited disease, phobia*". Much of the use of this jargon is not relevant to the statement given, and is not defined further. The use of jargon should not only be to impress the public, but must be clear so that it can be understood by all levels of society.

In news articles A9 to A12 published by Tribunnews.com, grammatical errors are often found and they do not follow the rules of good writing. There are many repetitions and data presentation are not concise. Apart from that, there were also several fatal editorial errors. There are many jargons that are not defined, for instance '*Forkopimda*' (A11). A9 contains blank word and many incomplete sentences are found in this media.

3.4. Validity Claim of Legitimacy

The validity claim of legitimacy looks at whether what the speaker says is true or in accordance with existing norms or values. The test of validity in this claim is whether the voices of other stakeholders are represented in the news. The condition for validity in legitimacy is that there are other voices included in a news story so that the news is balanced. The public or other experts can be added to legitimize news. Throughout the article, the media does not convey the views of other stakeholders. However, regarding the Government's statement, in several articles, the media conveyed additional information that could legitimize or delegitimize the government's statement.

News articles A2 and A3 try to convey their voice by presenting additional reviews of existing facts so that the information obtained by the public is balanced, but unfortunately, they do not present the views of experts or other

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stakeholders. A6 presents facts on the ground from media coverage and also adds a statement from Anies Baswedan as Governor of DKI Jakarta.

In A3 regarding Jokowi's statement regarding the difference between 'going home' and 'returning home', the media did not present perspectives from other experts, for example from linguists, so this article did not get expert opinions regarding this terminology. Apart from that, community representation as perpetrators of 'going home' and 'returning home' should also be conveyed so that consensus can be met. However, the media conveyed information regarding data from the Ministry of Transportation which showed that there had been a movement of almost a million people from cities to their hometowns, so this voice did not support the validity of Jokowi's statement. This additional information can be categorized as 'the voice' because it can balance Jokowi's statement. This additional information actually contradicts Jokowi's homecoming ban because there has been quite a large movement of people which is thought to have caused the spread of the Corona virus to the destination villages. In this news, Jokowi also said that a homecoming ban would be implemented. This form of strategy is included in the type of authorization strategy.

In news A7, reporting on Indonesian Migrant Workers (PMI) from East Java, Khofifah Indar Parawansa, as Governor of East Java, conveyed strategies in the form of policies in an effort to help facilitate PMI. Although representative voices from other stakeholders are not shown, this article provides an explanation of the strategy. In A8, A11, and A12 the type of strategy carried out is authorization, namely the implementation of restrictions on bus transportation and bus terminals (A8) and the formation of a task force involving elements of the Lhokseumawe City Forkopimda (A11). Meanwhile, A12 determines ODP and PDP using data obtained from immigration.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion above, the findings of the entire article found several distortions in the Government's statements that were reviewed in the media. The following table summarizes the findings.

Table 3: Summary of Analysis of Validity Claims in News

Number of News	Claim of Validity	Distortion	News Articles
6	Truth		A6, A7, A8, A9, A11, A12
6		Misrepresentation	A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, A10
5	Sincerity		A7, A8, A9, A11, A12
7		False Assurance	A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, A6, A10
2	Clarity		A3, A7
10		Confusion	A1, A2, A4, A5, A6, A8, A9, A10, A11, A12
4	Legitimacy		A2, A3, A6, A7
8		Ilegitimacy	A1, A4, A5, A8, A9, A10, A11, A12

The most frequently unfulfilled claim is the claim for clarity which can result in confusion. Many statements made by officials use jargon or terms that are not well defined. The use of these terms appears only to give an impression to the public without any further explanation. When providing data, officials also gave the impression that they did not have the data ready in their statements.

In this research, apart from focusing on official statements, it is also inseparable from studying media reporting itself. In this research, it was found that the media mostly only focuses on reporting on government statements and forgets the function of the media, which is as a conveyor of balanced and accurate information to the public. In reporting on the Government's statement, especially in a crisis, the media should be able to support claim of legitimacy by conveying representatives of other stakeholders regarding the report.

In presenting news, many editorial errors were found on Tribunnews.com, such as errors in writing data, repetition of information, and other text errors. The advantage of online media is actually in its editorial where news corrections or revisions take longer than print media. However, until this research was carried out, editorial errors were still the same as at the time of broadcast. This is a note in this research because Tribunnews.com is included in the category of three online media which are used as a reference for the public in looking for news related to the Covid-19 pandemic. In contrast to Kompas.com and Detik.com, articles on Tribunnews.com are longer and have sub-topics. However, unfortunately, it is not used to review further the statement which is the main topic. Tribunnews.com chose to fill in news repetition about positive Covid-19 cases that are not related to the main topic. Further review of the main topic by representing the voices of other stakeholders can be used as a legitimizing function in the media.

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The conclusion of this research is that the message conveyed in communication between governments, as communicators, and society, as communicants, must be clear in order to achieve the goal of mutual understanding, not the opposite, misunderstanding. So, in this way, strategies and actions to overcome the Covid-19 pandemic can produce solutions.

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