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## Communication Strategy for Increasing Village Community Participation in Handling Covid-19

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### Abstract

The purpose of this research is to describe the communication strategy for increasing village community participation in handling Covid-19. A convenient communication for increasing village community participation in handling Covid-19 includes three strategies. *Firstly*, designing message by the senders to village community. The communication for handling Covid-19 involves the senders, namely village government and Covid-19 task force, meanwhile the messages cover the government policy, program and strategy for handling Covid-19 including the appeals of village government such as washing hands by sanitizer/soap, wearing mask, and maintaining social/physical distancing. *Secondly*, selecting channel, both direct and indirect. The village government supported by the Covid-19 task force in handling Covid-19 directly convey the policy and program for handling Covid-19 to the village community and indirectly convey the policy and program for handling Covid-19 through banners, flyers, and social media like whatsapp groups. *Thirdly*, participating receiver, namely village community. The communication strategy emphasizing the village community participation in handling Covid-19 effects on: (a) the increased village community understanding of Covid-19 information, and (b) the changed village community behavior to conduct healthy life. The effects perform the feedback for the success of the village government and Covid-19 task force in implementing the government policy, program and strategy for handling Covid-19.

**Keywords:** communication channel; communication strategy; village community participation; Covid-19; village government.

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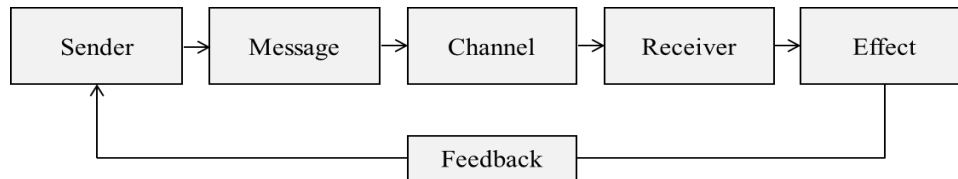
## **1. Introduction**

The case of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (Covid-19) was first announced by the President of the Republic of Indonesia on March 4, 2020. Since then the increase in cases has continued to occur significantly in a number of regions in Indonesia until July 2020. Following up on this, the Indonesian government also declared the Covid-19 problem has become a non-natural national disaster. This is stated in article 50 of Law Number 24 of 2007 concerning the Disaster Management because this virus has been categorized as a global disease, so in Indonesia itself its status is a non-natural national disaster [23]. The Indonesian government responded to this by issuing the Presidential Decree Number 7 of 2020 concerning the Task Force for the Acceleration of Handling Covid-19 which is under and responsible to the President. It is hoped that the formation of the Task Force can help the President in relation to the spread of Covid-19 in Indonesia which requires fast, precise, focused, integrated and synergistic steps between ministries/governments and local governments [8]. The Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia is a member of the Task Force who has an important and leading role in this effort. In addition, the Ministry of Health has also built cooperation with other sectors to take part in various preventive and control measures in suppressing the rate of increasing cases simultaneously in various fields. One of them is to carry out public education on prevention of distribution in line with existing policies. This was followed by instructions from the President and the regional government and their staff to work hand in hand to make several tactical steps as an effort to prevent the spread of the Covid-19 in the community. From the ministerial level to the head of the province, regency and even city government. Based on Law Number 6 of 2014 concerning Villages, village can be seen as a legal community unit that has territorial boundaries that are authorized to regulate and administer government affairs, the interests of the community local based on community initiative, rights of origin, and/or traditional rights that are recognized and respected in the government system of the Republic of Indonesia [24]. Village government is part of the regional government sub-system that directly interacts with the community. In dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic in the regions, apart from being the responsibility of the regional head, the village head also takes the same role and responsibility in dealing with Covid-19 in its territory. Village community participation in handling Covid-19 is one of the factors that can determine the success of the government's role in ending the Covid-19 in Indonesia. Village community support should always receive attention and its existence should always be made at every opportunity. However, to increase the village community participation in handling Covid-19, a communication strategy is needed by the village government and the Covid-19 task force. In this context, an effective communication strategy plays an important role in relation to communication regarding the handling of Covid-19, particularly conveying policies, programs and informations of the government to the village community in dealing with and anticipating the spread of Covid-19. Based on the background, this research aims to describe the communication strategy for increasing village community participation in handling Covid-19.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

Communication strategy by Middleton is defined as a best combination of all communication elements (sender, message, channel, receiver, and effect) designed to achieve the optimal communication goals. According to Rogers, communication strategy is designed to change the human behavior at the large scale through the transfer of new ideas [2]. Communication strategy by Lasswell is related to the use of communication to achieve the

strategic objectives through applying three functions: (1) surveillance or providing information about the environment, (2) correlation or presenting solutions to solve problems, and (3) transmission, which is educating and socializing [3, 11]. Effendy argues that the determination of communication strategy is surely based on the elements of communication. Referring to Lasswell's notion of communication, a convenient way to describe an act of communication is to answer the following questions: who says what in which channel to whom with what effect? [4, 5, 6, 9, 16]. In Lasswell's perspective, communication belongs to at least five elements, namely sender ("who"), message ("says what"), channel ("in which channel"), receiver ("to whom"), and effect ("with what effect") [4, 6, 10, 16, 18, 19] as indicated in Figure 1.



**Figure 1:** Theoretical Framework of Communication Strategy

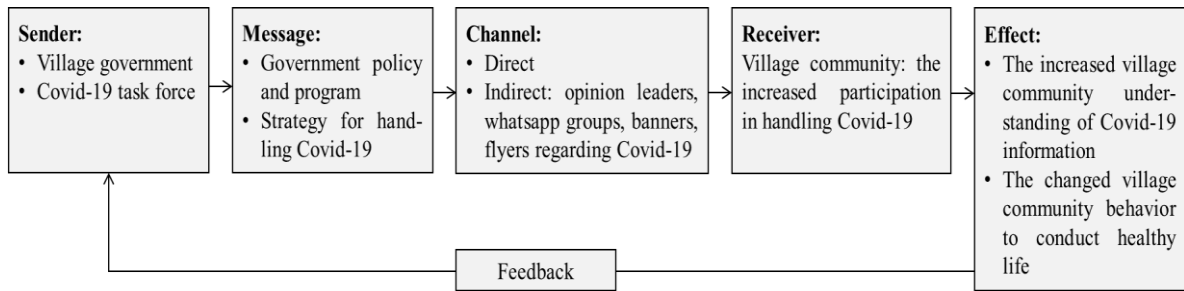
Based on the elements as indicated in Figure 1, communication strategy begins with the steps to determine sender, design message, select channel, define target receiver, and determine effect of communication.

### 3. Methodology

This research was conducted in Cimande Hilir Village, Bogor Regency, Indonesia during two months (June-July, 2020). The informants of this research consisted of the head of village, secretary of village, members of Covid-19 task force, head of family welfare empowerment (*Pemberdayaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga/PKK*), head of hamlet (*Rukun Warga/RW*), head of neighbourhood (*Rukun Tetangga/RT*), and the surrounding community. Primary data were collected from the informants through observation and interview, meanwhile secondary data were collected from the relevant literatures and documents. Data of this research, both primary and secondary, are qualitatively described. Referring to the thought of Moleong, by qualitative description this research describes the presence of subject or object of research based on the occurring fact and causality [12]. Therefore, this research qualitatively describes the picture of communication strategy for increasing village community participation in handling Covid-19.

### 4. Result and Discussion

The communication in this research is included in the disaster communication such as Covid-19 disaster, so that the strategy implemented in the disaster communication is essentially related to how the village government and the Covid-19 task force convey the policy, program and strategy for handling Covid-19 to the village community. The communication strategy for increasing village community participation in handling Covid-19 applies the steps to determine sender, design message, select channel, define target receiver, and determine effect of communication (Figure 2).



**Figure 2:** Communication Strategy for Increasing Village Community Participation in Handling Covid-19

Based on Figure 2, there are three communication strategies for increasing village community participation in handling Covid-19 in Cimande Hilir Village.

**Firstly, designing message.** The communication for handling Covid-19 in Cimande Hilir Village involves the senders, namely village government and Covid-19 task force. The Covid-19 task force involves public health officers (staffs of public health center/*Pusat Kesehatan Masyarakat/Puskesmas*, staffs of integrated healthcare center/*Pos Pelayanan Terpadu/Posyandu*), head of PKK, head of RW, head of RT, community police officer (*Bhayangkara Pembina Keamanan dan Ketertiban Masyarakat/Bhabinkamtibmas*), village supervisory non-commissioned officer (*Bintara Pembina Desa/Babinsa*), and village volunteers. Meanwhile the messages cover the government policy, program and strategy for handling Covid-19 including the appeals of village government such as washing hands by sanitizer/soap, wearing mask, and maintaining social/physical distancing [1, 7, 15]. In order to stem Covid-19, the village government continues to make efforts divided into two phases. The first phase is the appeal phase. The village government supported by the Covid-19 task force mobilizes the involved stakeholders as a medium of education for the village community. The Covid-19 task force disseminates messages/informations and appeals through whatsapp groups or through infographics in banners and flyers. The second phase is the action phase. The village government supported by the Covid-19 task force, particularly community police officer (*Bhayangkara Pembina Keamanan dan Ketertiban Masyarakat/Bhabinkamtibmas*) and village supervisory non-commissioned officer (*Bintara Pembina Desa/Babinsa*), imposes the strict sanctions to anyone who ignores the village government appeal. The presence of health protocols, resources, regulations, leadership and so on serves as a guidance for implementing the handling of Covid-19. The village government and the Covid-19 task force designs a communication strategy that refers to increasing public knowledge of potential risks and threats to health problems so that they are able decide on steps and actions that can protect themselves from Covid-19. This is of course important for the village government and the Covid-19 task force to give attention and priority to the goals of key behavior change which are considered as essential to reduce the Covid-19 case efficiently and effectively. In order to gain the government policy, program and strategy for handling Covid-19, the village government always coordinates with the district government and the regency government, and involves the entire village community through changes in Covid-19 information provided. The village government supported by the Covid-19 task force socializes and disseminates the government policy, program and strategy for handling Covid-19 including the appeals of village government such as washing hands by sanitizer/soap, wearing mask, and maintaining social/physical distancing to the village community. This messages/informations and appeals in handling Covid-19 are designed through infographics in banners and

flyers and broadcasted through whatsapp groups so that the village community is rapidly received. **Secondly, selecting channel.** The communication strategy to convey the informations/messages (policy, program and strategy for handling Covid-19) to the village community in Cimande Hilir Village lies in selecting the convenient channel of communication. The village government and the Covid-19 task force use the diverse channels, both directly and indirectly. They themselves directly convey the policy and program for handling Covid-19 to the village community and also indirectly convey the policy and program for handling Covid-19 through the usage of conventional channels like banners and flyers. Moreover, the village government and the Covid-19 task force use the alternative media in accordance with the habitual media of receiver/village community. The village government and the Covid-19 task force use the social media [14, 15, 17] like whatsapp groups to convey the informations/messages of Covid-19 to the village community. The village government supported by the Covid-19 task force stipulates the directions/instructions to head of RW and head of RT as spearheads in handling Covid-19. The whatsapp groups uploads the directions/instructions concerning the duties of head of RW and head of RT in handling Covid-19. The directions/instructions contain the duties of head of RW and head of RT to educate the village community in handling Covid-19, ranging from washing hands by sanitizer/soap, wearing mask to social/physical distancing. The village government and the Covid-19 task force also approach the handling of Covid-19 through participating the opinion leaders. Referring to the thought of Lazarsfeld, the messages do not move directly from a sender to the receiver. Instead, a small group of people, gatekeepers, screen media messages, reshape these messages, and control their transmission to the receivers. Opinion leaders initially consume media content on topics of particular interest to them and make sense of it based upon their own values and beliefs. In the second step, the opinion leaders filter and interpret the messages before they pass them along to individuals with shared ideologies who have less contact with the media, opinion followers [21, 22]. The opinion leaders presenting in the village community can be the mouthpieces for the messages and informations from the senders. The opinion leaders generally belong to high social status in the eyes of village community, so that they can influence the public opinion. In the village community having low digital literacy and low awareness to be accessible to the messages and informations, the role of opinion leaders is really influential. The village community tends to more believe in the messages and informations coming from the influential persons. Therefore, the participation of opinion leaders is important so that the messages and informations can go to the village community. Moreover, the village community easily believes in the sender having similarities to them. **Thirdly, participating receiver.** A convenient communication strategy of village government and Covid-19 task force in handling Covid-19 in Cimande Hilir Village is to participate receiver, in this case village community. The role of village community to conduct the Covid-19 appeals and understand the Covid-19 messages and informations of village government and Covid-19 task force encourages the handling of Covid-19. The mechanism used for the communication strategy in handling Covid-19 emphasizes the village community participation in handling Covid-19. The village government has implemented Covid-19 appeals through communication activities to village community entrusted to the hands of Covid-19 task force, namely public health officers (staffs of public health center/*Pusat Kesehatan Masyarakat/Puskesmas*, staffs of integrated healthcare center/*Pos Pelayanan Terpadu/Posyandu*), head of PKK, head of RW, head of RT, community police officer (*Bhayangkara Pembina Keamanan dan Ketertiban Masyarakat/Bhabinkamtibmas*), village supervisory non-commissioned officer (*Bintara Pembina Desa/Babinsa*), and village volunteers. Each individual is the spearhead of change towards a better mutual cooperation to break

the chain of the spread of Covid-19. The village community must be able to understand basic information about Covid-19 and change the old to healthier, new behavior [1, 7]. The leadership of village government is an important factor in determining the progress of the village, but the village government is also impossible to carry out its duties and responsibilities to make the village progressive without the support and participation of the village community [13, 20]. The leadership and participation from village community must run simultaneously and in line in order to create a conducive and harmonious atmosphere so that the goals and ideals of making the village even better will be realized. The success of the strategy implemented by the village government and Covid-19 task force cannot be separated from the name of the sense of togetherness between all related stakeholders in order to achieve the goal of living together. The success of the strategy is certainly supported by the village community. The relationship between village government and its community runs well and enables a conducive communication to increase community participation in handling Covid-19 effected on: (a) the increased village community understanding of Covid-19 information, and (b) the changed village community behavior to conduct healthy life. The effects perform the feedback for the success of the village government and Covid-19 task force in implementing the government policy, program and strategy for handling Covid-19.

## 5. Conclusion

Based on the result and discussion, this research concludes three findings regarding communication strategy for increasing village community participation in handling Covid-19. **Firstly**, designing message by the senders to village community is a convenient communication strategy of village government and Covid-19 task force in handling Covid-19. The communication for handling Covid-19 involves the senders, namely village government and Covid-19 task force, meanwhile the messages cover the government policy, program and strategy for handling Covid-19 including the appeals of village government such as washing hands by sanitizer/soap, wearing mask, and maintaining social/physical distancing. **Secondly**, selecting channel is included as a convenient communication strategy of village government and Covid-19 task force in handling Covid-19. The village government and the Covid-19 task force use the diverse channels, both directly and indirectly. The village government supported by the Covid-19 task force in handling Covid-19 directly convey the policy and program for handling Covid-19 to the village community and indirectly convey the policy and program for handling Covid-19 through the usage of conventional channels like banners and flyers. Moreover, the village government and the Covid-19 task force use the alternative media in accordance with the habitual media of receiver/village community. The village government and the Covid-19 task force use the social media like whatsapp groups to convey the informations/messages of Covid-19 to the village community. **Thirdly**, participating receiver, namely village community, is a convenient communication strategy of village government and Covid-19 task force in handling Covid-19. The role of village community to conduct the Covid-19 appeals and understand the Covid-19 messages and informations of village government and Covid-19 task force encourages the handling of Covid-19. The communication strategy emphasizing the village community participation in handling Covid-19 effects on: (a) the increased village community understanding of Covid-19 information, and (b) the changed village community behavior to conduct healthy life. The effects perform the feedback for the success of the village government and Covid-19 task force in implementing the government policy, program and strategy for handling Covid-19.

## 6. Recommendation

This research recommends to deeply explain the communication strategy for increasing village community participation in handling Covid-19 based on designing message, selecting channel and participating receiver. It uses the limited samples of the village government, the Covid-19 task force and the village community. Moreover, it is conducted in limited location. The next research will take the large samples and wide location in order to deeply explain the communication strategy for increasing village community participation in handling Covid-19.

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