

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Covid-19 Information on Instagram: Reception Analysis towards Indonesian Youth Audiences

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Instagram social media platform has become the source of recent information on various fields for the youth audiences, including the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic that Indonesia and the world are currently facing. Unfortunately, not every information on Instagram, especially the controversial and viral ones, are aimed to be informative. Some information is considered provocative and only creating panic instead of raising awareness. This research is intended to understand how Indonesian youth audiences perceive Covid-19 related information through Instagram and how useful and informative the information has been. The research is conducted using a qualitative approach and reception analysis method by interviewing the informants to achieve specific data. All informants are categorized as youth audiences with different socio-cultural backgrounds. Findings in this research show that informants tend to be in the negotiated reading position, in which they are negotiating the Covid-19 information they gain from Instagram with the discourse that they may receive from other sources. They believe that Covid-19 is real, but they have concerns in regards to the handling effort of the virus spread in Indonesia. This negotiated position has evoked both fear and alertness among Indonesian youth towards the uncertainty condition of this pandemic era.

Keywords: covid-19 information, instagram, youth audiences, reception analysis.

Kanal media sosial Instagram telah menjadi sumber informasi terbaru dalam berbagai bidang bagi audiens kaum muda, termasuk pandemi Covid-19 yang sedang dihadapi oleh masyarakat Indonesia dan dunia. Sayangnya, tidak seluruh informasi di Instagram bertujuan untuk menginformasi audiens, terutama pada berita yang kontroversial dan viral. Beberapa berita bahkan cenderung provokatif dan menciptakan kepanikan alih-alih kewaspadaan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memahami bagaimana kaum muda Indonesia mempersepsi informasi Covid-19 di Instagram serta seberapa berguna dan informatif berita tersebut bagi mereka. Penelitian ini dilaksanakan dengan pendekatan kualitatif dan metode analisis resepsi dengan mewawancarai informan untuk mendapatkan data yang spesifik. Seluruh informan dalam penelitian ini merupakan kaum muda dengan berbagai latar belakang sosio-kultural yang berbeda. Temuan dalam penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa para informan berada dalam posisi pembaca yang menegosiasikan segala informasi yang mereka terima di Instagram dengan wacana yang mereka dapatkan dari sumber lain. Mereka percaya bahwa Covid-19 benar-benar ada, namun gamang dengan upaya penanganan yang ada di Indonesia. Posisi negosiasi ini telah membangkitkan rasa takut sekaligus waspada pada diri kaum muda Indonesia, terkait dengan kondisi yang penuh ketidakpastian pada era pandemic saat ini.

Kata Kunci: informasi covid-19, instagram, audiens kaum muda, analisis resepsi.

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Ever since the Covid-19 pandemic hit the world back in early 2020, the internet usage shows a significant growth. This is related to the pandemic situation that forces people to stay at home and conduct things remotely. Gadgets and the internet are essential to stay productive from home. Moreover, they also act as a source of entertainment and information. As gadget and internet usage increased significantly, so does social media usage. Globally, the growth of active social media users shows a significant rise. In January 2021, it increases approximately 13.2%, in which is about more than 490 million since January 2020 (We Are Social & Hootsuite, 2021).

In Indonesia, the number of active social media users has reached 170 million, and is equivalent to 61.8% of total population (We Are Social & Hootsuite, 2021). In compare to January 2020's record, it increases approximately 6.3% or more than 10 million; with Instagram as the third most-used social media platforms (86.6%), only behind Youtube (93.8%) and Whatsapp (87.7%) in the first and second place respectively (We Are Social & Hootsuite, 2021). Based on the characteristic of the application (apps), if Youtube is categorized as video service apps and Whatsapp is instant messenger service apps, then Instagram is the most-used social networking site in Indonesia, in compare to other social media apps such as Facebook, Twitter, and Tiktok.

Social media platforms have become an integral part in people's everyday life, particularly for the youth. The report show that as of January 2021, the majority of social media users in Indonesia by age group is between 18 to 34 years old (We Are Social & Hootsuite, 2021). This age group could be considered as young people or the youth (Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 40 Tahun 2009 tentang Kepemudaan, 2009). In the relation with media usage, media is believed to not only occupy a central place in young people's social and cultural lives, but also have been crucial in shaping the concept of youth as a distinct generational category (Bennett & Robards, 2014; Osgerby, 2004). In terms of generation, youth in this age group is identified as the transition of millennials and generation-Z (Dimock, 2019; Shatto & Erwin, 2016).

In Indonesia, there's a significant increase in the usage of Instagram in this pandemic, particularly among youth (Fadilla, 2020; Purwaningtyas, 2020a; Rohmah, 2020). Even with the intention of entertainment, in the middle of this global pandemic, Instagram users will most likely stumble upon information related to Covid-19. For instance, Instagram has facilitated an easy way to obtain credible information by putting the official Instagram account of Indonesian government's Task Force for Covid-19 handling (@satgascovid19.id), Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (@kemenkominfo), as well as the Ministry of Health (@kemenkes_ri) on top of Instagram's recent searches. Besides, there are some informational accounts on Instagram such as @pedulilindungi.id, @pandemictalks, and @covid survivor.id in which gain many followers in the platform.

With the stream of information and news about Covid-19 in Instagram, it is intriguing to look further into how it may affect the Indonesian youth audience. Moreover, the issue of Covid-19 in Indonesia is quite problematic if not controversial for some factors. One of them is that some people believe that the issue of Covid-19 pandemic is false and intentionally spread by several parties as a part of global scheme conspiracy. This issue

was particularly brought up by Jerinx SID, the infamous musician who has many followers in social media (Yanuar & Ekayanthi, 2020). Another factor is that people are fed up of the government's handling method for the pandemic, as it uncovered in late 2020 about the corruption of Covid-19 social aid fund by then Indonesia's Minister of Social, Juliari Batubara (Launa & Lusianawati, 2021).

Previous research regarding to this matter presented that the youth has growing the distrust toward Indonesian government as well as some media institution (Purwaningtyas, 2020a). The distrust towards information has led social media users to utilize Instagram as escapism platform for entertainment purpose during the pandemic (Fadilla, 2020). However, this research approached the case with virtual ethnography method and focused more on the relation between youth's agency and media exposure in regards to Covid-19 issue. Another previous research conducted by survey found that 80% of netizen agreed that social media was useful as social information, 93% of people agreed to social media as information media of Covid-19, and 85% agreed that social media could be satisfying in information seeking of Covid-19 (Rohmah, 2020). This research results indicate that social media platforms, including Instagram, is still trusted by netizen as the source of Covid-19 information.

With the dynamics of Covid-19 information flow in the Instagram, it raises another question in regards to how youth audiences perceive that information, since audience perceptions are differed and closely related to audience's socio-cultural background. The analysis is based on Stuart Hall's dominant/hegemonic, negotiated, and oppositional reading positions of the audiences toward media content (Hall, 2004). Therefore, this paper aims to analyze how Indonesian youth audiences perceive the Covid-19 information in Instagram, particularly ones that are published in @satgascovid19.id, @kemenkes_ri, @pedulilindungi.id, and @pandemictalks accounts. Other Covid-19's related informational accounts existed in Instagram are not included because they are not followed by informants in this research. Informants are consisted of ten youths with varied socio-cultural backgrounds who currently stay in urban cities in Indonesia, including Jakarta, Bandung, Surabaya, Bali, and Yogyakarta. Method used in the research for this paper is the reception analysis, in the frame of qualitative approach. In-depth interviews with informants and digital observation upon selected Instagram accounts are conducted as the data collecting method. In order to protect informants' personal data, all informants will be mentioned in this paper by number, starting from Informant #1 to Informant #10.

Result and discussion

Social media has become an integral element of information access and dissemination (Hermida, 2016; Vázquez-Herrero et al., 2019). In particular, Instagram apps as a social media platform, has become powerful media outlets to provide information, find sources and story ideas, promote content and increase traffic to people's websites (Kramp & Loosen, 2017; Vázquez-Herrero et al., 2019), as well as another means to reach, communicate, interact, and engage with their audience (Lewis & Molyneux, 2019; Vázquez-Herrero et al., 2019). Youngsters as the part of millennials and generation Z tend

to get newest and most information from the internet and social media, and it is a part of the youth culture as their constant connection to the media platforms (Bennett & Robards, 2014; Zemmels, 2012). In this research, all informants admit that they rely on their mobile phone for the most up-to-date news and information about what's going on in the whole world, including the issue around Covid-19 pandemic.

Among many media that informants have been accessing during the pandemic, Instagram is one the most accessed platforms. Since the pandemic broke in early 2020, they began following some informational accounts that are related to the Covid-19 issues, such as @satgascovid19.id, @kemenkes_ri, @pedulilindungi.id, and @pandemictalks. The distribution of accounts followed by informants as below:

Table 1. Covid-19 Instagram informational accounts followed by informants

No.	Account	Followed by
1	@satgascovid19.id	Informant #1, #2, #3, #5, #6, #8, #10
2	@kemenkes_ri	Informant #1, #3, #4, #5, #6, #8
3	@pedulilindungi.id	Informant #2, #3, #4, #5, #7, #9, #10
4	@pandemictalks	Informant #1, #2, #3, #4, #5, #7, #8, #9

Source: Researchers' data findings

In discussing about the audience's perception, the socio-cultural background of the audiences themselves cannot be neglected (Hall, 2004). Hence, the description of informants' background details is presented as below:

Table 2. Informants' background details

No	Informant	Age	Sex	Location	Current educational status	Education field
1	#1	19	Female	Yogyakarta	College student	Medicine
2	#2	19	Female	Yogyakarta	College student	Informatics engineering
3	#3	19	Female	Yogyakarta	College student	Pharmacy
4	#4	19	Male	Jakarta	College student	Communication
5	#5	19	Male	Jakarta	College student	Communication
6	#6	20	Male	Surabaya	College student	Law
7	#7	21	Female	Surabaya	College student	Medicine
8	#8	23	Female	Bandung	Bachelor graduate	Industrial engineering
9	#9	22	Male	Bali	College student	Accounting
10	#10	23	Male	Bali	Bachelor graduate	Sociology

Source: Researchers' data findings

All informants have their own reason to follow Covid-19 informational accounts on Instagram. However, there are some patterns and similarities among informants in regards

to this matter. First of all, the @satgascovid.id account is being followed because of its status as the official account of Covid-19 Handling Taskforce (*Satuan Tugas Penanganan Covid-19*) created by the Indonesian government. Most informants agree that they tend to trust the information shared by @satgascovid.id for “the status as an official account”. The similar reason is also applied to why informants follow the @kemenkes_ri account, as it is the official account of Indonesia’s Ministry of Health.

Secondly, informants tend to trust Covid-19 informational account that is managed by doctors or people who are considered as capable in addressing the Covid-19 issues. The account @pandemictalks is one example. Up until July 2021, this account has reached over 328.000 followers, in which is a lot more than @satgascovid19.id that only has around 208.000 followers, though is not more than @kemenkes_ri account with over 2,1 million followers. Lastly, the @pedulilindungi.id is the official account of digital apps *Peduli Lindungi* in which is created by three Indonesia’s ministries, the Ministry of Communication and Informatics, Ministry of Health, and Ministry of State-Owned Enterprises. In compare to three previous accounts, @pedulilindungi.id is followed later by informants in order to keep up with information about Covid-19 vaccination in Indonesia.

Findings in this research indicate that informants tend to trust the Covid-19 informational accounts that are managed by the government and the people who are considered as the expertise in health issues. However, does this mean that informants believe in all information shared by those accounts? Apparently, informants’ perception towards the Covid-19 information is varied in accordance to the issues brought by those accounts. Nevertheless, the main finding is that, at some point to some extent, all informants negotiate all information they receive; they neither accept nor deny all of the information. This leads us to the next part of the discussion about the negotiation conducted by the informants in perceiving the Covid-19 information in Instagram.

Negotiating discourse: an effort to make sense of the reality

In examining youth audiences’ perception towards Covid-19 information in Instagram, the classic Stuart Hall’s model of Encoding/Decoding (Hall, 2004) is applied. Particularly, the ‘decoding’ end where audience might decode any given message they gain from the media. Based on Hall’s concept of ‘decoding’, there are three ways of readers position in perceiving the message. First, the dominant or preferred readings, in which the message is decoded with the same meaning as was intended when it was encoded (Hall, 2004; Shaw, 2017). Second, the negotiated readings, in which involves a mixture of preferred and resistant readings (Hall, 2004; Shaw, 2017). Third, the oppositional readings, in which the audience member decodes the message in the opposite way as was intended by the sender (Hall, 2004; Shaw, 2017). Findings in this research indicate that, in general, informants as the audience tend to be in the negotiated readings position.

There are findings that support the notion that informants in this research are in negotiated readings position. First, even though informants follow the Instagram account for its source’s credibility (based on the administrator of the account), they tend to criticize the way the account delivers the information. On one side, they believe the credibility of the account and the data shared by it. On the other side, they are questioning the way the

account delivers the information. The contradicting opinions could be seen in the reception towards content published by @pandemictalks below, as an example.

Figure 1. Instagram post of @pandemictalks



Source: @pandemictalks Instagram page

In response to the content above, most informants perceive the data presented in the infographic as true, since the source of the data is the government. However, most of them also feel that the information is leading the audiences into mass panic, because the data of Covid-19 death toll is not balanced with the data of patients who was able to survived or cured from the disease. Hence, informants tend to argue that the way the @pandemictalks presents the data is tendentious, as stated below.

“[trans.] I cannot help but thinking that information shared about Covid-19 tend to make people afraid and panic instead of making people aware and cautious. Especially ones about current positive rate or death toll. They highlight only the negative side and never inform the positive side. I know perhaps that’s the only way to tell people about the urgency and importance of this pandemic matter. But this kind of information could attack people’s mentality. It’s good when people become cautious, but what if they break down mentally because of information like this? We never know. Information should be both ways; not only the negative but also the positive ones should be informed to people.” (Informant #8, 2021)

As stated above by one of the informants who has the background as social science student, the Covid-19 information spread is deemed as putting less care about the socio-psychological impact on the audiences. On the hand though, three of ten informants who are currently studying in the field of health and medicine find that information shared in Instagram in regards to current positive rate and death toll is overwhelming. As health and medicine students, they feel empathy and related to the health workers who are sacrificing their lives as the front guard to face the pandemic. Hence, they argue that the way informational accounts such as @pandemictalks and @kemenkes_ri deliver the

information is not problematic, since it is urgent and important to raise people's awareness. Even so, they admit that some people may receive the message differently, as stated below.

“[trans.] What *Kemenkes* and *Satgas Covid* share on their Instagram accounts are real data from the field. I know that some people might say the information is exaggerating, but for me personally, it is necessary in order to raise people's awareness about the urgency of this pandemic matter. Although, I have to admit that sometime seeing those information makes me worry too. But if the way they present the information is wrong, then I don't know which way is right.” (Informant #7, 2021)

Some informants noticed positive and negative impacts from the rise of Instagram as a medium to publicize information related to Covid-19. Although people of digital society become updated and aware, most of the news leads to negative matters such as increasing numbers of infected patients. They believed that such things could impact people's psychological state, because everyone can post information on their Instagram account, some non-media-institution-based accounts without a strong literature capability often rely on a “clickbait” headline for their engagement, though it can be misleading. An informant even suspected that the number of dead Covid-19 patients might be faked or manipulated with a particular purpose, such as to receive an allowance from the government. At this level, the negotiated readings position has led informants into a certain degree of distrust, not only towards the Instagram account, but also towards the information content and whichever sources of the content might be.

Distrust and -at some point to some extent- rejection are not a new thing for a crisis situation, particularly in this Covid-19 pandemic era (Purwaningtyas, 2020a; Yanuar & Ekayanthi, 2020). The form of distrust, though, is possible to be aimed at various parties, such as the government, the media institution, even some group of people. In assessing communication messages, people already has a social perception beforehand (Griffin, 2012; Holmes et al., 2020; Yanuar & Ekayanthi, 2020). Social perception itself arises because of previous experiences or allusions to the person or to some institutions. Hence, social perception is a reference where the perception is stored in people's memory; it is called as the “reference point”. This social perception is what determines people's level of acceptance of the presence of a communication message (Pavić & Šundalić, 2017). They can accept, reject, or decide something, according to the calculations they have in mind, regarding the communication message they receive. In the case of the findings in this research, it indicates that the informants tend to show a “contrast effect” (Pavić & Šundalić, 2017; Yanuar & Ekayanthi, 2020); where people see the message from a point of view that they would not want to accept, given the social perception of something that is in their mind.

However, the contrast effect on the informants isn't absolute, because at some point to some extent, and in some different contexts, they also tend to show an “assimilation effect” (Pavić & Šundalić, 2017; Yanuar & Ekayanthi, 2020); where people see the message from a point of view that is similar to theirs. Informants thought the information published in those Instagram accounts is already clear, considering it's usually arranged in daily and

straightforward language, as well as supported by evidence such as a snippet of video or pictures. However, even though the substance is clear, they argued that it doesn't attract the public as much as possible because the arrangement isn't appealing to the eyes nor stimulating curiosity. Some informants even believed that most Covid-19 information on Instagram is easily understandable, but requires effort to obtain it. The clarity, though, according to informants, is very depended on the account. Some accounts made a creative and interactive infographic. However, other accounts only copied different headlines. Informants argued that this type of account is the one that will most likely cause misunderstanding.

Those findings above indicate that informants in this research show a mixture of preferred and resistant readings towards Covid-19 information in Instagram. Hence, it leads to the notion of negotiated readings position. Particularly, this position is strengthened by informants' ability to manage the information they receive with their own knowledge. This leads us to the second finding that supports the notion that informants in this research are in negotiated readings position: how informants process the information they receive with the experience they have in real life. In other words, they combine their prior knowledge they obtained from other sources with the information they receive from Instagram in order to create their own understanding upon issues that are related to Covid-19. It is found in the way informants perceive certain issues in regards to Covid-19 pandemic, for example the "self-isolation" conducted by Covid-19 positive patients with mild symptoms or asymptomatic patients, as below.

Figure 2. Instagram post of @pandemictalks



Source: @pandemictalks Instagram page

In response to the content above, informants tend to perceive the information as helpful and believable. However, they reason why they tend to perceive the information that way is also supported by their prior knowledge in regards to "self-isolation" or "self-quarantine" procedure. Some of informants in this research have experiences in having one or more of their family members or close acquaintances that were diagnosed as Covid-19

positive, but showing no symptoms. Therefore, they have some information from people's real experience of conducting the "self-isolation" procedure.

"[trans.] Some accounts on IG give like different opinions, and there are so many choices of what to consume, what to eat, what vitamin or medicine we should take, during self-quarantine if you are tested positive for Covid-19 but showing no symptoms. But when my father was tested positive two months ago, we just followed doctor's instruction for self-quarantine. Thankfully he's getting better and now is already tested negative. And if comparing what the doctor instructed to us back then, with what I see from the Pandemictalks, it's actually not much of a difference, because the essence is how to increase our immunity and maintain a healthy life." (Informant #10, 2021)

Some informants admit though, that the many and varied information in regards to "self-isolation" procedure is overwhelming and at some point, is making them confused. However, they try to reduce their confusion by comparing that information with the real-life experiences from others that they received directly from people who have that experience. At this point, even though being exposed by Covid-19 information from social media platforms they access, informants tend to have the capability to filter which information they could believe and which they couldn't. This capability enables informants to be on the negotiated reading position as they currently are at. Hence, this is in correspondence with Hall's intention in analyzing the decoding process in a non-deterministic way (Hall, 2004; Shaw, 2017). Some structural position might function to set parameters to the acquisition of cultural codes, the availability (or otherwise) of which might then pattern the decoding process (Shaw, 2017). In this case, informants' experience, as well as people around them, are also shaping the social-structural position that enables informants to process the information they obtained from Instagram.

Despite their differences in the universities that the informants attend or the majors they take, they all show a similarity in answers, which indicates that they are in a negotiated reading position. The similarity occurs due to their experience as part of a youth audience introduced to gadgets and social media at a young age (Bennett & Robards, 2014; Osgerby, 2004). Informants are approximately on their early 20s by the time they are interviewed. They're neither too young to be a beginner in social media, nor too old to be unfamiliar with social media's features and impacts (Subrahmanyam & Smahel, 2011; Zemmels, 2012). All informants have a few years of experience in using social media, particularly Instagram. These few years of experiences indeed taught them that misinformation is part of the negative effects of Instagram. They have strategies to prevent themselves from being involved in spreading misinformation by trusting or worse by sharing it with someone else (Prensky, 2012). This leads to the third finding that supports the notion that informants in this research are in negotiated readings position: how they select to re-share Covid-19-related information they obtained from Instagram.

Apparently, youth audiences in this research tend to have their own standard for Covid-19-related information that they choose to share on their Instagram account. The @pandemictalks is mentioned as the informational account that informants are mostly

repost in regards to Covid-19-related issues. In deciding whether to repost the content or not, informants tend to consider: (1) whether the issue is important for them or not, and (2) whether the content can be trusted or not. For the issues in regards to Covid-19 pandemic that they deem as important are mostly issues that related to health protocols, new normal adaptation, and vaccines. In the particular of health protocols issue, informants in this research tend to show their concern in regards to the many of Indonesian citizens who violate or neglect the health protocols on daily basis.

“[trans.] I think health protocol is the most important issue here. I like to repost Pandemictalks on that matter, because I see it myself that many people still fail to care properly about health protocol, for example like using masker or double-masker, or frequently wash their hand before entering public places.” (Informant #9, 2021)

Another concern that informants have is in regards to Covid-19 vaccine. The “infodemic” in Indonesia (and some other parts of the world) has somehow created a digital polarization in regards to this matter (Sirait & Sanjaya, 2021; Ullah et al., 2021; Yusuf et al., 2021). In social media platforms, for example, there can be found so many accounts that promote the “anti-vaccine movement” that leads people to refuse to get vaccinated (Izzati et al., 2020). In this matter, informants perceive their action of sharing or re-posting information about the importance of vaccine as an effort to contribute to the society, in order to flatten the curve of the pandemic. Besides, they also perceive the action as an effort to fight the Covid-19 “infodemic” in Indonesia.

At some point to some extent, the “infodemic” in Indonesia has motivated informants to utilize their Instagram personal account as a tool to fight the misinformation, disinformation, and mal-information in regards to the Covid-19 pandemic. One of the ways they conduct is by searching for information from as many sources as possible, not only the ones they are exposed too. At this level, the informants are reflecting the behavior of active audience. This leads to the fourth finding that supports the notion that informants in this research are in negotiated readings position: how information they obtain from Instagram has motivated informants to search for other sources and learn more about Covid-19-related issues. This finding is found in the way informants perceive certain issues in regards to Covid-19 pandemic, for example the Covid-19 vaccine, as below.

Figure 3. Instagram post of @pandemictalks



Source: @pandemictalks Instagram page

Whenever informants receive information about Covid-19 vaccine in Instagram, they do not immediately perceive the information as the truth. Instead, they actively search for other sources in order to cross-check the validity of the information. In response to the content above, informants tend to perceive the information as trusted, yet that does not make them just accept it instantly. Instead, believing the information only propel them to search for similar topic from other sources. At this level, informants show the tendency of practicing the “uses and gratifications”, where people are assumed to use media for their own particular purposes (Griffin et al., 2018). In “uses and gratifications” theory, it is argued that people tend to gratify their needs by using the media. In this research, it is found that informants tend to utilize Instagram and other media platforms they can access to fulfill any “needs” in regards to the Covid-19 issues. For example, the needs to feel that they have been contributed positively in the society for trying to flatten the curve of pandemic by spreading information they deem as useful for people.

Another notion from “uses and gratifications” theory is that the media affects different people differently (Griffin et al., 2018). Even though all informants in this research show the tendency of being in a negotiated reading position, the way they negotiate their readings on Covid-19 information is varied. In a nutshell, based on findings in this research, none of the informants adopted a dominant reading position, where they decode information, symbol, and meanings according to the communicator’s intentions (Hall, 2004; Shaw, 2017). This is reflected in informants’ action for always check and confirm everything they found on Instagram to other sources before trusting or sharing it with others. Compiling information from other sources affected the overall understanding of specific issues.

None of the informants adopted oppositional reading as well, where they reject entirely what the communicator's trying to tell because most of the information isn't all fake (Hall, 2004; Shaw, 2017). All informants agree that the news is not fake but packaged with hyperboles and rhetoric devices prone to misinterpretation. For example, some informants mentioned that information about vaccines is still ambiguous. They believe that vaccines are part of the government’s priority and being taken care of. However, they also argue that the media hasn’t been fully open and honest about the progress or even obstacles that the government faces when dealing with this matter. Meanwhile, other informants suspect

data manipulation. Although they do believe in a specific process and procedure for publicizing data of infected patients or mortality rate, they tend to see it as suspicious, considering the precautions that have been taken aren't strict enough for the data to be as few as it was.

Henceforth, the negotiated reading position found in this research is rather a spectrum of informants' efforts in understanding and producing the meaning upon information they obtained from the Instagram informational accounts. On one side it could lean more to the dominated/hegemonic reading, but on the other side it could lean more to the oppositional reading. This discussion, therefore, leads to another discussion in regards to how this spectrum of negotiated reading position has constructed informants' perception towards Covid-19-related information on Instagram informational accounts. Moreover, it is significant to discuss the aftermath of the negotiated reading position, considering that the pandemic has forced people to adapt and live in a new normal way that is full of uncertainty.

The era of uncertainty: youth in between fear and alertness

In the process of meaning production by decoding the Covid-19-related information on Instagram informational accounts, Indonesian youth has shown the tendency of hesitation and anxiety towards any information they receive; hence the negotiated reading position. On one side, this brings caution at some extent, in which makes them being critical and actively rechecking and cross-checking in order to avoid themselves of being a victim of misinformation and disinformation. On the other side, this position also affects them psychologically, whether they realize or not. At some point, informants in this research have shown the tendency of feeling terrified upon anything that might happen in the uncertain future. In other words, Indonesian youth is seemed to be trapped in between fear and alertness while dealing with exposure of Covid-19 information. This could be seen through some aspects in the way informants perceive Covid-19 information posted in Instagram informational accounts.

First aspect is in how informants react towards the information about the violation of health protocols conducted by some people.

“[trans.] Back in the end of 2020, the numbers of Covid-19 patients were decreasing, so there was like this kind of hope that 2021 would be a better year. But suddenly it raised again in the middle of 2021 right after the Lebaran holiday, though government had told people not to go back to their hometown but they still did, and look what happened! And it's even worse than what we had to deal with last year. So, yeah, seeing Covid-19 (information) is everywhere and on Instagram too, it makes me fed up, actually, and pitiful, beyond words.” (Informant #8, 2021)

Some informants believe that Covid-19 information on Instagram focuses more on the violations of the health protocols, such as a crowd of people in a closed space not practicing physical distancing, a fake rapid test result letter, and people who do not wear a mask when going out. The comments of Instagram posts informing these issues are filled with swearing and hatred. Furthermore, this controversial issue is accompanied by a

provocative or sarcastic headline and caption. Although this kind of information can raise awareness of obeying the agreed protocols and regulations to prevent the spread of the virus, the information encourages people to follow protocols not because they truly understand why the protocols were made in the first place, but rather because they are afraid of being exposed and hated. Therefore, informants argue that the information failed to educate the readers, at some point to some extent.

Besides, informants concern that the way informational accounts disseminating information in regards to health protocols is only sparking hatred from netizen towards people who violate the health protocols. Hence, this hatred could hinder the original message of urging people to follow the health protocols. This way, instead of becoming a space for knowledge transfer and discussion, the social media has become a space for hate-speech. On one side, the information about health protocols violation has raised awareness for informants; they have become alerted that there are people out there who violate the health protocol, therefore they need to be careful, not following those people to conduct the same mistake, and also alerting people around them for abiding the health protocols. On the other side, there is this fear that the curve would never be flatten because of these people who keep violating the health protocols. Besides, they also concern about the hate-speech that are flooding the social media, that it will only make the situation worse.

Scholars have reported that evidence of the impact of social media on health knowledge, behavior, and outcomes show that these tools can be effective in meeting individual and population health needs (Al-Dmour et al., 2020). Some informants found that the pandemic has a positive impact in terms of empathy and hygiene. They argue that it has made them realize the importance of health and maintaining cleanliness. Previous research in regards to the influence of social media platforms towards public health protection against Covid-19 has shown that public health awareness and public health behavioral changes mediated the effects of social media platform use on health protection; however, the mediating effect was partial (Al-Dmour et al., 2020). Apparently, this tendency has also shown in this research. In this case, informants in this research were the people whose awareness and health behavioral are changing in a positive way towards health protection.

Additionally, the results of previous research indicated a significant and positive indirect effect of social media platform use on health protection against COVID-19 through public health awareness and public health behavioral changes (Al-Dmour et al., 2020). For informants in this research, the notion from previous research from Al-Dmour et al is also applied. However, it cannot be neglected that informants in this research have shown concerns in regards to the fact that there are people out there who do not show any behavioral changes and awareness towards health protection; the fact that they achieved from social media platforms. Hence, even though it is indicated that social media use had a significant and direct positive effect on public health protection (Al-Dmour et al., 2020), it is only applied to people who have concern in regards to this matter, such as informants in this research.

This whole new normal situation is somehow ringing a bell of previous Gidden's notion in regards to modernity. Modern reflexivity leads to the loss of everyday social

routines and to the anxiety about the future, which is principally open towards all kinds of alternative scenarios (Giddens, 1991; Hartley, 2019). In other words, regained freedom and humanism carry a burden of responsibility and all kinds of man-manufactured risks that need to be dealt with (Pavić & Šundalić, 2017). As informants argue, the pandemic also reminded them that as a human, they have to be responsible for their actions, as others may also feel the consequences of it. Hence, the information that there are people who violate the health protocols and seem to not having any consideration about the consequences of their action towards others, is making informants anxious at some point to some extent. On one side, they feel angry toward those people. On the other side, they feel helpless for not knowing how to advise them to obey the health protocols, not only for the sake of themselves but also for the sake of people around them.

Second aspect that supports the notion that Indonesian youth is seemed to be trapped in between fear and alertness while dealing with exposure of Covid-19 information, is in the way informants respond to the flooding Covid-19 information in general (not specified to any certain issues). In a nutshell, they were overwhelmed by Covid-19 information posted in some Instagram informational accounts that they follow. Some informants admit that even though the information flood did not make them paranoid, they did at times feeling confused to determine which information is reliable. Informants were struggling to find trustworthy content on Instagram, considering many information were controversial due to their hyperbolic headline or mainly just to provoke users.

“[trans.] Every time I open the Instagram, there are many Covid-19 information in it, sometimes it’s just too much, too many bad news, even if it’s good news I just can’t take it as good news anymore. I don’t know what to believe anymore, but at the same time I really want to know more and precisely about what’s happening with this pandemic.” (Informant #6, 2021).

At some point to some extent, there is this degrading trust towards the media institution, or the personality behind the media, among informants. This could lead the informants, as audiences, to hold the position in a oppositional reading, because they tend to object towards what the media told them (Hall, 2004). However, they were not fully object. Instead, the content of the media has sparked some curiosity that triggers them to gain deeper understanding about Covid-19 through other sources. On one hand, the Covid-19 information flood, as well as the “infodemic” mentioned earlier, has made informants exhausted mentally. On the other hand, one of the ways to ease their mind is by trying to search for more information, in hopes that it would bring some enlightenment for them.

The communication of science is found to be problematic in this Covid-19 pandemic. Moreover, in the Indonesian context, the way government conducted public communication in regards to the pandemic crisis handling is considered as poor and unreliable (Purwaningtyas, 2020a). As informants in this research argue, this condition tends to lead to their hesitation when accessing information about Covid-19 in social media platforms. Even though the source of the information is a scientist, they still find it hard to trust. The skepticism and doubt in scientists and certain aspects of science as an institution

can be explained by the three-fold combination of (1) postmodern individualization and doubt in all kinds of social institutions and authorities, (2) lack of knowledge and information partially based in evolutionary developed cognitive deficiencies, and (3) rising media influence. (Pavić & Šundalić, 2017).

Even though Pavić & Šundalić mentioned the “rising media influence” as one of factors why people become skeptical and doubtful towards scientist, this Covid-19 pandemic situation has shown that it is actually in the science communication itself that’s problematic. Regardless of any media they use, as long the communication of science is not delivered in a language and style that is easily understood by the general public, the meaning of the information will not be conveyed properly. Instagram is currently the closest social media platforms that Indonesian youth hold most dear (Fadilla, 2020; We Are Social & Hootsuite, 2021), yet the platform itself is proven not enough as the means to make them believe, moreover understand better about Covid-19. Apparently, in the context of Instagram, the usage of Instagram as a source of information platform is more complex, in which leads us to the third and last aspect that supports the notion that Indonesian youth is seemed to be trapped in between fear and alertness while dealing with exposure of Covid-19 information.

The last aspect could be seen through how youth audiences in this research perceive the usage of Instagram itself as a source of information platform. On one side, as the social media platform that they most frequently access, Instagram plays the role as Indonesian youth’s first source of information in regards to any kind of news from all around the world and their surroundings. As a follower, though they could control which Instagram accounts that they follow, they could not control what kind of information that the accounts they follow are posting onto the platform. Hence, informants in this research tend to get Covid-19-related information from the Instagram firsthand. Informants tend to admit that their decision in following the Covid-19-related informational accounts is made under the awareness that they need to follow the update of the issues. However, they also admit that the flood of Covid-19 information on Instagram are burdensome at times.

“As much as I want to quit Instagram, because sometimes it’s too burdensome and overwhelming, those Covid-19 news made me stress and all, but I also need it. Perhaps it’s the FOMO thing, I don’t know, but all I know is that I can get many things from it. I got entertainment, as well as useful information, sometimes.”
(Informant #9, 2021)

Informants tend to think that they don’t feel the need to log off from their Instagram, no matter how burdensome it is for them, or how it has made them worry and afraid about the current Covid-19 pandemic. More or less, they are aware that they can’t control whatever is happening on Instagram. Hence, they choose to stay in Instagram, even though it might overwhelm them with the information flood. Informants argue that perhaps the reason why they decide to stay in Instagram after all is because the “fear of missing out” (FOMO). However, at some point to some extent, the FOMO is not necessarily a bad thing for youth. On the other hand, it could lead to better information processing (Moore & Craciun, 2020; Neumann et al., 2021). In this research, informants show the tendency of

managing their FOMO into an effective information processing method, in which they do not rely solely on Instagram as the source of information, but also other sources that they consider as credible.

Besides, informants in this research admit that they tend to stay in Instagram not only because of the needs to keep update with the Covid-19 information, but also because Instagram is their source of entertainment. Informants tend to admit that they still need Instagram as a medium for entertainment and communication, because the pandemic has made their physical interactions with their friends and relatives decrease. Therefore, informants tend to express their concern in the way informational accounts deliver Covid-19-related information in Instagram. Considering people usually use their Instagram for entertainment purposes, some informants argue that the media could gradually increase people's interest in reading news by posting lighter content such as lifestyle or features related to Covid-19. Some others argue that Instagram is a platform to post pictures, consequently the contents should be brief and interactive. In addition, they believe that an infographic could be a useful educational tool for Covid-19 information.

Informants' arguments above are in accordance with the mediality of Instagram itself as a social media platform. The mediality, in which refers to the special characteristic of certain media platform that distinct it from other platforms (Bruhn, 2016), of Instagram has constructed the way users interact and process the information they gain in the platform (Purwaningtyas, 2020a, 2020b; Serafinelli, 2018). In this research, informants argue that the more attractive and lighter the format of the content is, then the more interested the audiences would be. Moreover, the mediality of Instagram that accentuates the usage of visuals (e.g., photos, picture, infographics, etc.) has made the users more familiar and used to visual-based information packaged offered by the platform (Serafinelli, 2018).

Based on their experience, informants argue that most of the time, people are more interested in controversial news compared to educational news. The pandemic has been going on for months; people believe that they are educated enough to acknowledge and apply the protocols. However, Covid-19 protocols are ever-changing depending on the situation. Therefore, in their view, it would be more effective if the media prepared more interactive content and integrated educational points into controversial news to keep the people updated on recent Covid-19 updates. However, the headline of Covid-19-related information on Instagram is often too hyperbolic. At this level, informants tend to have awareness that the media is trying to attract their audience and increase engagement. They argue, however, that an exaggerated headline can lead to misinterpretation. All of these informants' understanding, eventually is the thing that makes them wary of the information.

The excessiveness of Covid-19-related information on Instagram has, on one hand, put informants in fear; fear upon the uncertainty and bad news that they keep seeing on the social media in regards to the pandemic. In addition, the way Indonesian government handles the crisis only seem to add more distrust among youth, as well as the way some media institutions deliver the information. On the other hand, they wary of the reality around them, in which they see people tend to do the opposite of the health instigation applied for Covid-19 prevention, as well as the people who tend to violate or neglect the health protocols. The whole situation has made them more cautious, hence they negotiate

their readings on media information by conducting several efforts, including actively search for other credible source of information.

Conclusion

In perceiving certain information delivered by Covid-19 informational accounts in Instagram, youth audiences tend to show the negotiated readings position. This negotiated readings position is shown through four aspects in how informants perceive the Covid-19-related information. First, they tend to criticize the way the account delivers the information, although informants follow the Instagram account for its source's credibility. Second, they tend to combine their prior knowledge they obtained from other sources with the information they receive from Instagram in order to create their own understanding upon issues that are related to Covid-19. Third, they tend to select Covid-19-related information they obtained from Instagram informational account to be re-shared on their personal Instagram account based on the importance of the issue as well as the accountability of the information. Fourth, they tend to search for other sources and learn more about Covid-19-related issues after getting information about similar issues from Instagram.

The negotiated readings position performed by youth audiences in this research is not something given that should be taken for granted though, as well as it cannot be assumed that all youngster Instagram users are having the same reading position as informants in this research. At this level, the socio-cultural background of the informants plays pivotal roles in shaping the informants' reading position. All informants are college students or have graduated from college; this means that they tend to have better understanding on media and digital literacy. Hence the capability of negotiating information they perceive from the social media they frequently access. Informants also represent most youth audiences who are currently learning in school or university. As technology becomes more advanced and integrated into our lives, especially in the middle of this pandemic where many things turn to digital and virtual, youth audiences are responsible for showing the proficiency they directly or indirectly obtain from years of education. The capability to analyze and think critically is put to practice in this situation, which once again results in the informants' adopted negotiated reading position.

However, the ability of negotiating in dealing with the flood of Covid-19 information in Instagram does not necessarily free them from the uncertainty brought by the pandemic. Youth audiences in this research have shown the tendency of being trapped in between fear and alertness, based on three aspects found in the negotiating process. First, the information about health protocols violation by some people out there has made informants upset and worry that the pandemic handling in Indonesia might take a long time, yet it has also made them become more aware in obeying health protocols. Second, the media's tendency to upload hyperbolic content has made informants confused and struggling in finding trustworthy content, yet it has also made them become more cautious and active in searching for more reliable information. Third, the flood of Covid-19-related information

in Instagram has made informants overwhelmed and burdened, yet it has also made them realize that they need the information, at some point to some extent.

In conclusion, youth audiences in this research tend to perceive information from Covid-19 informational accounts on Instagram in negotiated readings position, but this position apparently comes in package with some consequences. The consequences are revolving around audiences' capability to process the information using the competence of media and digital literacy. On one hand, it forces them to be more critical towards information they achieve. On the other hand, it affects them psychologically and evokes some burdens that could be detrimental to their mental health. Overall, this research is limited to only small amounts of informants because the in-depth investigation enables by reception analysis method. Henceforth, it needs separate research in the future in regards to how the "infodemic" might provoke the audiences psychologically. Furthermore, the direct impact of media and digital literacy in youth's information processing also needs to be examined, particularly in the new normal era where people are forced to adapt more with vast development of digital media information and communication.

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