

## Online Media Coverage of COVID-19 in Tempo.co

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### ABSTRACT

When WHO (World Health Organization) declared COVID-19 a pandemic, the world realized that COVID-19 was a real threat. In Indonesia, the first case appeared on March 2, 2020. The Indonesian government categorized COVID-19 as a non-natural disaster. The aim of the research is to see how news trends appear in online media related to COVID-19, especially on Tempo.co. The research method uses content analysis with purposive sampling to process data. The data was then analyzed using the concept of news objectivity and health communication theory. As a result, 97% of COVID-19 news dimension on Tempo.co are related to health themes. The largest portion of the news is the spread of the virus, at 79%. From 840 news articles, 99% are reported in straight news. Overall, the media was successful in conveying health issues on the public agenda and was able to frame the problem (pandemic) correctly.

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## 1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic began with an unusual pneumonia found in Wuhan, China in late 2019. Subsequent cases emerged in Singapore, Korea, and Thailand. Not long after, 23 countries were already in the grip of COVID-19. WHO officially declared COVID-19 a global pandemic on March 11, 2020 (Prajarto, 2021). The first case emerged in Indonesia on March 2, 2020 with the status of an imported case from a Japanese citizen. One month later, on April 13, 2020, the President issued Presidential Decree No. 12 of 2020 concerning the Determination of the Non-Natural Disaster of the Spread of COVID-19 as a National Disaster. The government's response was considered slow because it took the government a month to decide on the national emergency status.

Online media in Indonesia recorded the initial traces of the spread of the virus until it was finally declared a pandemic. Before the confirmed positive cases emerged, the government seemed reluctant to take preventive measures. Not to mention the flood of information related to COVID-19 in online media. In fact, in the era of a global pandemic, the government must be ready to face and provide good education. The readiness of the community in facing a pandemic is determined by the government's public communication, especially regarding public health communication (Basch et al., 2020; Boer et al., 2020; Setiawati et al., 2021).

In non-natural disaster situations (pandemics), problems are often found in terms of communication management. Research conducted by Aldilal (2020) shows that the government's attitude is inconsistent regarding the rejection of foreign workers (from China) at the beginning of the pandemic. In reality, 500 foreign workers from China were brought to Southeast Sulawesi during the pandemic. This can be a criticism as well as good input for the government's public communication in the future. The author wants to know how public health communication in Indonesia is viewed from the perspective of online media reporting, especially Tempo.co. Tempo.co was chosen because it is a pioneer of online news platforms (Aldilal et al., 2020; Setiawati et al., 2021).

The health theme was chosen by researchers because health communication has a definition of utilizing media or other technologies to disseminate information about health that is beneficial to

the community. The health theme referred to by researchers is related to public health communication. Some of the themes chosen are related to the spread of viruses, descriptions of viruses, symptoms of viruses, treatment and prevention (Rihhadatul'aisyi et al., 2021; Wee & McNeil Jr, 2020).

Online media was chosen because of its nature that is able to update quickly. In line with what Xiong said in Aldilal (2020), online media as an agent for the massive dissemination of information related to virtual communication. In a non-natural disaster situation such as a pandemic, the public also needs access to fast and accurate information. When viewed from a public health communication perspective, the media also has a role, especially in educating and advocating in terms of policy making (Aldilal et al., 2020; Syaipudin, 2020).

Different from the research conducted by Setiawati (2021) in March 2020. The research stated that the large number of online media did not contribute enough to the dissemination of useful information. In fact, the media often conveyed the same information only by changing the title and writing format. The problem of content and depth of information is also very weak (Akbar et al., 2021; Mhealth et al., 2020; Setiawati et al., 2021). Given this issue, this study aims to examine COVID-19 in Tempo.co Online Media Coverage.

## 2. Method

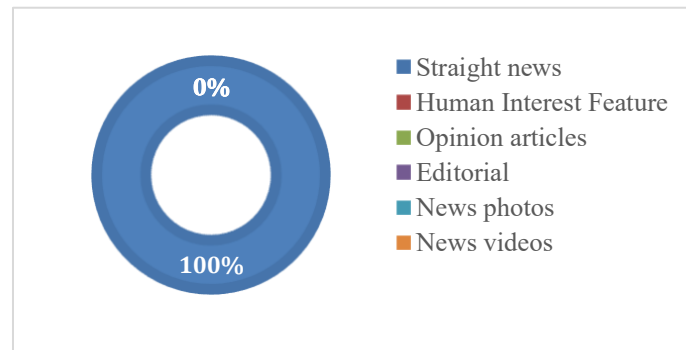
The method used in this study is a descriptive method with a quantitative content analysis approach. This method was chosen because content analysis is considered sufficient to describe and explain a problem whose results can be generalized. For this reason, content analysis tends not to prioritize the depth of analysis or data, but rather the breadth of the data so that it can be considered representative of the entire population taken. Through content analysis, researchers can find out the description, character and development of the content (Sumarno, 2020).

The object of this research is the online media Tempo.co, with a population of all news articles from January-March 2020. The total number of articles obtained was 840 articles. The sample was selected using the purposive sampling method, which is a sampling technique based on certain characteristics. Data collection was carried out by pulling digital data. Pulling digital data was carried out with predetermined hashtags (#), including #virus, #coronavirus, #coronavirus, and #Covid-19. The data was then grouped into categories and written in a coding sheet for further processing. This method is used so that researchers can ultimately answer research problems (Abdurahman, 2020; Sumarno, 2020).

One of the objectives of content analysis research is to measure and observe certain aspects in media content. Therefore, researcher created a coding sheet to help answer research questions about how online media frames the issue of COVID-19. The coding sheet was also used to compile units of analysis in this study. The researcher used three physical units of analysis. The three units of analysis are news form, health theme, and news dimension (Agus & Zuhri, 2015; Boer et al., 2020; Eriyanto, 2019).

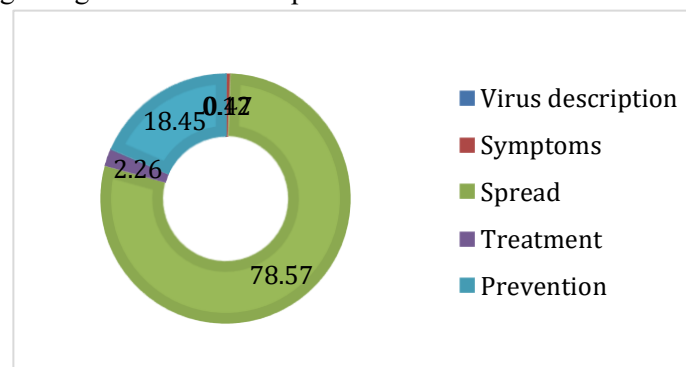
## 3. Results and Discussion

The news format section consists of six forms or types of news based on the theory of online journalism. The forms of news are straight news, human interest features, opinion articles, editorials, news photos, news videos. Here are the results:



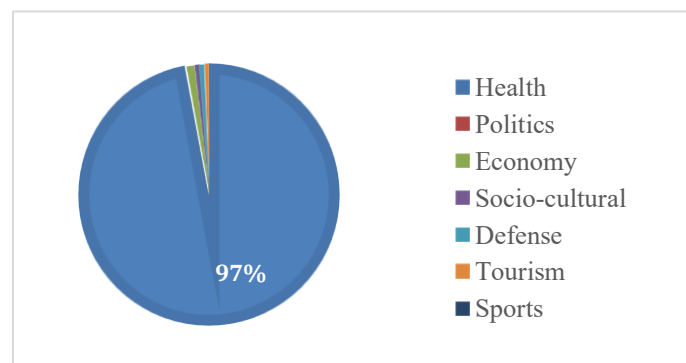
**Figure 1.** News Form

The largest percentage is in the straight news section. As much as 100% news related to COVID-19 is included in the straight news (see Figure 1). Placing COVID-19 news as a straight news is a way to attract the attention of the public. This also shows the function of mass communication regarding education to the public.



**Figure 2.** Health Theme

Figure 2 shows the largest percentage is on news about the spread of the virus, as much as 79%. This means the audience should not underestimate the pandemic of COVID-19. The second largest percentage is news about preventing the virus, as much as 19%. The author believes that this is intended to make the public understand that COVID-19 is a virus that spreads easily. A good message is not necessarily well received, but a verified message is one way to combat the pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused uncertainty and panic in the community. Moreover, it is coupled with the many misinformation that are widely spread on social media. In a disaster situation, uncertainty always arises so that accurate information from trusted sources is needed. The panic buying situation at the end of January 2020 in Indonesia is an example of one of the effects of the pandemic.



**Figure 3.** News Dimension

Figure 3 shows Tempo.co is quite focused on informing the public about COVID-19 because it is related to health. Tempo.co shows a large percentage of 97% related to the news dimension, mostly about health. Tempo.co does have a good reputation as a credible media in reporting. Therefore, Tempo.co does not want to make a blunder and continues to place news about COVID-19 in the health dimension.

#### 4. Conclusion

During a pandemic, in addition to having to provide information quickly, it must also be accurate (valid) and easy for the public to understand. In this regard, the author sees that the scientific explanation in Tempo.co is quite clear because almost all articles have scientific explanations. This kind of thing is needed by the public to more easily understand news with scientific terms that may be foreign to the ear. In a situation like this, the public or audience does not need information or news that is click-bait because it will cause distrust of the media concerned.

Online media coverage during the pandemic is very much needed by the public. Tempo.co provides sufficient coverage that can be a reference for its readers. From online media coverage (Tempo.co), researchers found that the government has not carried out good public health communication. But thankfully online media (Tempo.co) has succeeded in taking on the role of providing reliable information.

The media has three functions during the pandemic. The first function is to place public health issues on the public agenda. While the media fails to tell people what to think, it does inform readers about what to consider. The second function is the ability to frame issues correctly. The ways in which the media frames social issues are linked to who, or what is considered responsible for the problem. The third function is the ability to propose specific social or public policy initiatives as the primary means of addressing the problem.

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