

HEALTH COMMUNICATION LAW IN THE PANDEMIC CRISIS: AN EXAMINATION OF PUBLIC INFORMATION POLICY, GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY, AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PROTECTION OF PUBLIC RIGHTS

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Abstract

This research discusses health communication law within the framework of the pandemic crisis with a focus on public information policy, government accountability, and implications for the protection of public rights. Transparent and accurate communication is a key element in delivering health information to the public to prevent misinformation and increase public awareness of pandemic mitigation measures. Government accountability in managing health communication policies also plays a major role in building public trust and ensuring effective policy implementation. In addition, this study highlights the importance of protecting people's rights, especially access to correct information and guaranteeing individual privacy, especially regarding health data. This study emphasises that health communication law should be a strategic instrument to balance crisis management with the protection of human rights and public communication ethics.

Keywords: Health Communication Law, Pandemic Crisis, Public Information Policy, Government Accountability, Implications, Protection of Public Rights

Introduction

The global pandemic that has occurred in recent years has had a tremendous impact on various sectors of life, including health, economy, social, and governance. In the health sector, the rapid spread of the disease triggers great pressure on the capacity of health facilities, the need for medical resources, and the protection of medical personnel as the frontline (Government of the Republic of Indonesia, 2009) . On the other hand, the economic impacts caused by the pandemic, such as increased unemployment, business closures, and financial market instability, pose great challenges to society. In addition, the pandemic has changed social dynamics by

requiring people to adapt to new norms, such as social distancing, mobility restrictions, and changes in work and education patterns. All of this cannot be separated from the ability of government governance to respond to crises with strategic and effective policies, including those related to health communication, which is at the forefront of mitigating the impact of the pandemic (Government of the Republic of Indonesia, 2008).

In crisis situations such as a pandemic, health communication plays a particularly vital role to provide accurate information, build public awareness, and support organised collective action to prevent and control the spread of disease. However, a major challenge that arises is how health information is delivered by the government to the public, which is often related to issues of accountability, transparency, and protection of public rights (Government of the Republic of Indonesia, 2018).

Accountability, which includes government responsibility for strategic action, policy evaluation, and public disclosure of decision-making processes, is an important element in dealing with crises. However, many cases show that some governments in various countries fail to meet these expectations, making people lose trust in their leaders (Handayani, 2021). Concerns are raised when government responses are perceived as slow, poorly targeted, or even inadequate in providing protection to the most vulnerable groups in society. The government's inability to account for its policies can also trigger larger social polemics, such as resistance to health policies and neglect of protocols that result in increased disease transmission (Susanto, 2019).

In addition to accountability, the issue of transparency in information distribution is a major concern. The pandemic requires the government to convey the latest data, facts, and information honestly and accurately to the public, whether related to the number of cases, vaccination policies, or mitigation measures (Wijaya, 2020). Unfortunately, in some cases there is data manipulation, lack of transparency, or inconsistent information dissemination, which can harm the public and compromise public trust in the government. This lack of transparency also intersects with violations of the public's right to access information. The public's right to correct, clear and understandable information is a fundamental element of good governance. When this right is neglected, the public becomes vulnerable to disinformation, hoaxes, and uncertainty, which ultimately undermines the effectiveness of the government's efforts to overcome the pandemic (Sari, 2021).

Health communication in the legal context must consider aspects of justice, protection of human rights, and the government's responsibility to provide reliable information that has a positive impact on decision-making by individuals and communities. Inaccurate or less transparent communication policies can trigger public distrust of the government, spread disinformation, and ultimately worsen the impact of the crisis faced (Government of the Republic of Indonesia, 2018).

During a pandemic crisis, effective and credible information distribution is crucial to avoid panic, prevent policy failure, and ensure that the public is protected in accordance with their rights, such as the right to correct information and access to health services. Unfortunately, in some cases, weak communication and government accountability in delivering information related to the pandemic have led to various negative implications, such as non-compliance with health protocols, increased cases of disinformation, and violations of people's rights (Putri, 2020).

In order to ensure that communication governance is fair, accountable, and prioritises the protection of public rights, it is necessary to review the government's public communication policies during the pandemic crisis. This review aims to determine the extent to which the policy supports the delivery of accurate information, involves high accountability, and guarantees the public's right to receive correct information as part of the legal principles of health communication.

Research Methods

The study in this research uses the literature method. The literature research method is an approach used to collect, analyse, and evaluate information that has been available in various written sources, such as books, scientific journals, articles, official documents, and research reports. This method aims to understand concepts, theories, and findings relevant to the topic under study without involving direct data collection through experiments or observations (Tranfield et al., 2003); (Machi & McEvoy, 2016). In doing so, the researcher identifies credible sources, organises the information found, and integrates it systematically to answer a research question or support a particular argument. This approach is often used in social, educational, and humanities research to derive theoretical foundations or compare the results of existing studies. The advantage of this method is its efficiency in utilising data that is already available, although it has limitations in describing actual or current conditions (Ridley, 2012).

Results and Discussion

Public Information Policy in Health Communication Law during the Pandemic Crisis

The dissemination of accurate and timely information is a vital element in managing public health crises, especially during a pandemic. Health communication systems play an important role in providing information to the public to maintain individual and community health. However, in emergency situations such as a global pandemic, significant informational challenges arise, both in terms of speed of delivery, validity, and legal restrictions on the information shared. Public information policies regulated under the legal framework of health communication are an important foundation to ensure the fulfilment of the public's right to information (Suharto, 2021).

One of the main aspects of public information policy is transparency. In the context of a pandemic, the government and related institutions are required to provide

honest, open and fact-based information. This is necessary to build public trust in the actions or policies taken by health authorities. When information is provided without transparency, people tend to doubt the credibility of the source of information and potentially take steps that endanger themselves and others. This transparency must remain subject to legal constraints that protect privacy, national security and other sensitive information (Dewi, 2020).

In addition, the accuracy of published information is a key pillar in health communication law. Information containing medical data, social restriction policies, health protocols, and vaccine distribution processes must be conveyed clearly and precisely to avoid the spread of misinformation or disinformation. In practice, misinformation during the pandemic has been a major challenge, whether caused by technical errors or the deliberate spread of false information. Therefore, legal policies should focus on mitigation measures against hoaxes spreading in the community, including through digital surveillance (Wardhani, 2021).

Furthermore, health communication laws in a pandemic must guarantee the accessibility of information. The information conveyed must be easily accessible to all levels of society without exception. Equality in access to information is an integral part of the fulfilment of human rights. In its implementation, the government needs to use various communication platforms, ranging from mass media, social media, to direct communication through community institutions. In addition, it is also important to consider vulnerable groups such as people with technological limitations or those with language barriers (Sofia, 2020).

The existence of legal policies that support health communication is also very necessary to minimise the adverse effects of various communication crises. For example, in situations where people receive conflicting information from various sources, health communication law can provide guidelines on official information verification mechanisms. This helps to create clear guidelines for the public to determine the accuracy of information as well as the trusted sources that should be followed (Iskandar, 2022).

In addition, in the context of health communication law, the mechanism for imposing sanctions against offences of spreading false information during a pandemic needs to be strictly enforced. This aims to provide a deterrent effect and protect the public from the adverse effects of disinformation. The spread of hoaxes regarding the pandemic, vaccinations, or health protocols can damage the overall pandemic handling process. Legal sanctions are an important instrument to maintain information stability in the midst of very dynamic challenges during the pandemic (Pratama, 2021).

Public participation also needs to be accommodated in public information policies during a pandemic. One-way communication, where the government only provides information without opening a space for dialogue, has the potential to create an imbalance in public perception of health policies. Therefore, health communication

laws must ensure participation processes, such as public discussions, surveys, consultations, and educational sessions, so that the public has the opportunity to provide input while understanding the steps taken by the government (Mahardika, 2020).

On the other hand, public information policy must also pay attention to the balance between freedom of expression and the prohibition of information that has the potential to harm society. The right to expression in the context of a pandemic is often misused to spread falsehoods or push anti-science narratives. Health communication law must be able to offer ways to maintain freedom of expression without ignoring the need for regulation of information that has the potential to make things worse (Setiawan & Andrianto, 2021).

As an appropriate solution, improving people's digital literacy is one of the focuses that should be emphasised in health communication policy. Digital literacy allows people to sort out information in cyberspace properly and recognise valid sources of information. Health communication law can encourage a national programme for digital education through a collaborative approach between the government, academics, and technology companies (Aditya, 2020).

Ultimately, the implementation of public information policies in health communication law is a strategic investment in building resilience in handling a pandemic. Information that is presented clearly, guaranteed accuracy, and easily accessible to the public can accelerate efforts to mitigate the impact of a pandemic. The policy must be based on the principle that everyone has the right to get the right information that can guide them in creating security and prosperity together.

The Role of Government Accountability in Health Communication

Government accountability is a fundamental component in the public service system, including in health communication. The government has the responsibility to provide accurate, transparent, and easily accessible health information to the public. This is important so that every citizen can understand health risks, how to prevent them, and what actions to take in emergency situations. By practising good accountability, the government demonstrates a commitment to optimally serve the public and support the achievement of better public health (Arifin, 2021).

The government's health communication should be based on the latest scientific data and supported by empirical evidence. When the government provides credible information, the public is more likely to trust the health policy or guidance delivered. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, clear and consistent health communications regarding health protocols and vaccinations were key to success in controlling the spread of the virus. Transparency regarding the origin of information and

steps taken by the government is a tangible form of accountability in health communication (Tanjung, 2021).

In addition to transparency, government accountability is also reflected through the ability to respond to criticism and input from the public regarding health communication. The government should open participation channels that allow citizens to express their opinions, be it through surveys, public discussions, or other digital platforms. The response to such inputs not only shows that the government hears the public, but also illustrates the readiness to make improvements for the efficiency of health communication (Hartono, 2021).

The existence of oversight mechanisms is also important in ensuring that the government is held accountable. Supervisory boards, NGOs, or mass media can monitor whether the government is providing health information that is in line with the facts and protects the interests of the people. If there are irregularities, these mechanisms can provide recommendations or demand explanations from the government. On the other hand, watchdogs also have an obligation to collaborate with the government to deliver health information to the public quickly and accurately (Yulia, 2020).

Accountability in health communication also includes the fair and equitable distribution of information. The government should ensure that health information reaches all levels of society, including those who live in remote areas, have language barriers, or are in vulnerable groups. This effort demonstrates the government's responsibility in minimising information gaps that can result in inequities in access to health services (Rahman, 2020).

The government also has a role to play in ensuring that health communication is able to build public trust. This can be done through consistent communication, high accessibility of information, and effective use of media. For example, through information dissemination on social media, television, local radio, and direct counselling, the government can ensure that health messages reach the entire community. This process requires good integration between various related institutions and sectors (Kusuma, 2022).

Government accountability responsibilities in health communication become more important in times of crisis. Natural disasters, pandemics, or other health threats often require quick reactions and clear information. Governments must be able to provide concrete direction and prevent the spread of disinformation. Vagueness or failure to communicate the steps that need to be taken can have adverse effects, such as increased public anxiety or actions that do not comply with Health protocols (Rahayu, 2021).

Overall, government accountability in health communication serves to maintain public trust, minimise the negative impact of potential health crises, and ensure that every citizen has access to quality health information. This not only strengthens the relationship between the public and the government, but also determines the success

of a country's health development. Therefore, strengthening government accountability should be a top priority in improving the effectiveness of health communication.

Implications of Information Policy on Public Rights, Including Access to True and Hoax-Free Information

Information policy is a set of rules and regulations designed by the government or related institutions to govern the dissemination, management and access to information in society. This policy has major implications for people's rights, especially in obtaining information that is true, accurate, transparent and free from hoaxes. This right is an important part of human rights guaranteed by various constitutions in the world, including in Indonesia (Hakim, 2021).

Honest and transparent information is a key element in building a democratic and forward-thinking society. Good policy should ensure that every individual has unhindered access to quality public information. With this policy in place, people can make important decisions consciously, armed with reliable data without the interference of hoaxes or manipulation (Wibowo, 2021).

One of the implications of information policy is the need to guarantee public access to accurate information. This policy can encourage those who produce information, such as mass media and government agencies, to take responsibility for the quality of their content. The government can support this through strict regulation and the establishment of credible information oversight bodies (Santika, 2020).

Hoaxes are one of the biggest challenges in today's digital era. The spread of misinformation can jeopardise social stability, cause unrest, trigger conflict, and undermine public trust in state institutions. Information policy should focus on eradicating hoaxes by involving technology, legal regulations, and education to the public (Susanto, 2019).

Digital platforms such as social media and news portals play a major role in information dissemination in the modern era. Information policies should include regulations for these platforms to ensure they control the content they disseminate, both through filtering algorithms and false information reporting features. This should also include penalties for serious offences (Handayani, 2021).

In addition to access to correct information, information policies must consider the privacy aspects of society. In many cases, the spread of hoaxes often involves the violation of citizens' personal data. Regulations that protect privacy while tightening the use of digital data are important steps that need to be implemented (Susanto, 2019).

The government needs to make information literacy education part of the national information policy. Information literacy helps people recognise the characteristics of fake news, understand how to verify information, and learn to use

technology to filter credible sources of information. This education should be carried out through schools, communities and mass media (Wijaya, 2020).

Another implication is the need for credible oversight institutions to regulate the flow of information. These institutions should be independent, transparent and responsible for ensuring access to valid news and identifying hoaxes. Institutions such as the Press Council or the communications authority have a central role to play in this (Sari, 2021).

The government as a policy maker has the responsibility to be transparent in managing public information. Openness of data and information helps the public to know the policies taken by the government, monitor their implementation, while minimising negative perceptions that are often the material for spreading hoaxes (Putri, 2020).

Information policy also brings legal consequences for hoax spreaders. The Law on Electronic Information and Transactions (ITE), for example, is one of the government's efforts to take action against perpetrators of hoaxes. Even so, the implementation of this regulation must still be monitored so as not to violate people's right to freedom of expression (Suharto, 2021).

The community has an equally important role in supporting this policy. Public awareness to always verify information, avoid spreading hoaxes, and actively report fake news can strengthen the implementation of information policies. This participation can also strengthen social control over parties who use information for certain interests (Dewi, 2020).

Thus, in the digital era, information policy has huge implications for people's rights, especially in ensuring access to correct and hoax-free information. This policy requires a comprehensive approach through legal regulation, technology, information literacy education, privacy protection, and active community participation. Thus, people can enjoy their right to quality information and contribute to the development of a healthy democracy.

Conclusion

Health communication law in a pandemic crisis emphasises the importance of transparent and accurate public information policies. Information conveyed by the government must be easily accessible and based on facts to avoid misinformation and public panic. In a pandemic situation, effective communication is a vital tool to foster public trust, support mitigation measures, and ensure the public understands the preventive measures to be taken.

Government accountability is an integral part of health communication law during a pandemic. Governments must be accountable for the delivery of information, the implementation of policies, and the management of public safety-orientated communications. This includes overseeing the use of health-based data and organising

public education in order to reduce the social, economic and psychological impact of the pandemic.

The implications of such laws for the protection of people's rights include the guarantee of the right to obtain correct information as well as protection from harm caused by misinformation or inaccurate data. In addition, the health communication law serves as a reminder not to neglect individual privacy rights, especially in the management of sensitive health data. Overall, the implementation of this law aims to maintain a balance between crisis management and the protection of human rights.

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