Power Struggle and New Media Actor Contestation in Indonesia during the Post Pandemic

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Abstract

In the new media space, narratives and discussions about covid-19 are still ongoing. Virtual audiences debate each other over the discourse that occurs. Research on the Covid-19 discourse has been carried out by many international researchers and Indonesian researchers. However, it is still not clear to the public who and how these actors fight in new media. How is the power struggle and contestation between the actors and those involved? This research uses the web crawler's method and the SNA (Social Network Analysis) method in collaboration with astramaya.id. Data research is limited to 2019 to 2021 considering and considers the high number of narratives, discourses, and discussions about Covid-19. The results of the study show that the contestation of actor networks in the Covid-19 pandemic discourse is divided into three main actor clusters, namely the government cluster, the scientist and buzzer cluster, and the popular scientific info provider actor cluster. The power struggle occurs in 3 (three) lines, namely the state, the media industry, and social media actors. The fight occurred instantly and pragmatically and, in the end, gave birth to hegemonic discourse and hegemonic actors in the discourse on the post pandemic.

Keywords: New Media, Power Struggle, Social Network Analysis.

Perebutan Kekuasaan dan Kontestasi Aktor Media Baru di Indonesia Pasca Pandemi

Abstrak

Di ruang media baru, narasi dan diskusi mengenai Covid-19 masih terus berlangsung. Audiens virtual saling berdebat mengenai wacana yang terjadi. Penelitian mengenai wacana Covid-19 telah banyak dilakukan oleh peneliti internasional maupun peneliti Indonesia. Namun, masih belum jelas bagi publik siapa dan bagaimana aktor-aktor tersebut bertarung di media baru. Bagaimana perebutan kekuasaan dan kontestasi antara aktor dan pihak yang terlibat? Penelitian ini menggunakan metode web crawler dan metode SNA (Social Network Analysis) yang bekerjasama dengan astramaya.id. Penelitian data dibatasi pada tahun 2019 hingga 2021 mengingat dan mempertimbangkan banyaknya narasi, wacana, dan diskusi mengenai Covid-19. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kontestasi jaringan aktor dalam wacana pandemi Covid-19 terbagi menjadi tiga klaster aktor utama, yaitu klaster pemerintah, klaster ilmuwan dan buzzer, serta klaster aktor penyedia informasi ilmiah populer. Perebutan kekuasaan terjadi pada 3 (tiga) lini yaitu negara, industri media, dan pelaku

media sosial. Pertarungan tersebut terjadi secara instan dan pragmatis dan pada akhirnya melahirkan wacana hegemonik dan aktor hegemonik dalam wacana pasca pandemi.

Kata-kata Kunci: *Media Baru, Perebutan Kekuasaan, Analisis Jaringan Sosial*

INTRODUCTION

The problem of the Covid-19 pandemic has not yet ended. Various factors and speculation analyses play into this pandemic. Starting from data and facts about omicron to an analysis of cross-border conspiracies that are on the way to a new world domination process. One strong aspect to influence the public or audience is the discourse built by powerful actors. Be it economically, politically, or technologically powerful. It is this narrative and discourse that influences the public on how we as an audience respond to the COVID-19 issue with all its variants. Many world researchers have carried out research on Covid-19, including on how to play discourse on print media in Sweden by F. Skog(Skog & Lundström, 2022). This research looks at how the game of covid discourse occurs in the print media. R. Kavuluru conducted research on Covid-19 from a new media perspective (Kavuluru et al., 2022), specifically the pandemic discourse on social media. Meanwhile, Odewale Obadimu examines Covid-19 and new media with a focus on how to talk on YouTube(Obadimu et al., 2021). Research on the Covid-19 discourse is then linked to the political discourse that occurs therein. As research conducted by Elize Massard da Fonseca (Fonseca et al., 2021). He found political discourse during the Covid-19 pandemic. This political and pandemic discourse then raises questions for researchers, especially about the Covid-19 pandemic discourse. Discourse on the Covid-19 pandemic has always

attracted the attention of actors fighting in the virtual world, including the state, the media industry, and social media actors or the public. Many research documentations that have been captured in reputable and accredited international journals, there has not been much research that specifically looks at how the struggle for power and the contestation of actors is related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The tendency of research that has been carried out only focuses on how the discourse occurs but not much focuses on contestation between actors or how and who the actors are involved behind the Covid-19 discourse. This study formulates research questions namely, how is the power struggle and contestation between the actors and those involved? This question is the main thread of this research.

Literature Review

Many world researchers have carried out research on Covid-19, including on how to play discourse on print media in Sweden by F. Skog (Skog & Lundström, 2022). This research looks at how the game of covid discourse occurs in the print media. Research on Covid-19 from a new media perspective has been conducted by R. Kavuluru who focuses on social media Twitter(Kavuluru et al., 2022). Meanwhile, Odewale Obadimu examines Covid-19 and new media with a focus on how to talk on YouTube(Obadimu et al., 2021). Research on the Covid-19 discourse is then linked to the political discourse that occurs therein. As research conducted by Elize Massard

da Fonseca(Fonseca et al., 2021). He found political discourse during the Covid-19 pandemic and according to Parmet & Paul, COVID-19 is the first "posttruth" epidemic (Parmet & Paul, 2020).

As one of the countries affected by Covid-19, Indonesia has experienced social, political and economic disruption. Several scientists from Gadjah Mada University, for example, conducted a comprehensive study of affected social sectors, economic setbacks, policy governance (Savirani & Wawan Masudi, 2020), and government communication strategies in the early days of the 2020 pandemic (Monggilo Zainudin Muda,2020). A similar study was then conducted again in 2021 to review status-quo developments (Savirani & Wawan Masudi, 2020).

Indonesia was hit by the Covid-19 pandemic (Savirani & Wawan Masudi, 2020) a few months after holding the 2019 elections. Some scientists who focused on politics, in understanding the pandemic, even continued throughout the first years of the pandemic. For example, highlights the involvement of the TNI, Polri and BIN in handling Covid-19 in Indonesia as a further expression of the trend of decline in democracy. Fealy believes that security-based and militaristic policies are not appropriate for times of crisis. A similar argument was also put forward by Primandari (Primandari, 2020), that democracy and human rights are not the government's priority during a pandemic. Setijadi (2021) even goes so far as to state that the pandemic is a political opportunity for President Jokowi to expand the interests and political power of old actors (Setijadi, 2021), which several observers (Aspinall, 2016; (Mietzner, 2020) consider having a

relationship with inheritance. The new order.

During the electoral period, these political interests and powers were indeed a concern for civil opposition, parties, and parliament (Santoso et al., 2020) over restrictions on people's rights and democratic freedoms. However, since the Covid-19 pandemic has greatly affected social, economic and educational life, these political interests and power have been highlighted more on what policy outcomes are produced to ease the burden on society (Mietzner, 2020). The socio-political dynamics further encouraged communication science studies to pay attention to the circulation of messages between the government and the people of Indonesia. The denial of the Minister of Health, Terawan Agus Putranto (in the Jakarta Post at 2020), regarding the prediction of the early spread of Covid-19 by Marc Lipstich became one of the clue phenomena to understand the next patterns of government communication during the pandemic. Nurindra (2021), for example, finds that this phenomenon attracts a lot of media attention. Nurindra also took samples of framing connotations from two national online media, Detik.com and Kumparan. com. His research concluded that seconds tend to use framing with neutral dictions, while coils articulate them slightly with negative nuances (Nurindra, 2021).

Several other studies highlight how the mainstream media reports on Indonesian government policies (Prayudi et al., 2021), how the government uses social media to report on pandemic policies (Prayoga, 2020), and how media journalism and the dynamics of criticism from activists respond government responses (Apriliyanti

et al., 2022; Primandari, 2020). Apriliyanti has another argument, that media coverage of expert opinions on government policies plays a role in opening policymakers' awareness of the real priorities of the policies expected by the public, although their research also finds that the government's attention to policy proposals that are viral in the media is only absorbed symbolically, rather than substantively(Apriliyanti et al., 2022).

In that context, the contestation of mainstream media and government power has been widely studied to reveal how the relationship between the two is good in fulfilling roles as public advocates, policy advocates, policy control, and discourse practices, as well as as tools for policy socialization. Arpriyani et. al. (2022) has dissected how the mainstream media plays an active role in the exercise of power in policy making. At this point, social media, as grassroots media, still has little study of its role in advocating for interests between the public, government and experts(Apriliyanti et al., 2022).

METHODOLOGY
Data Collection

The data collection method is in the analysis of interrelationships and contestation between actors, using the web crawler and SNA (Social Network Analysis) methods in collaboration with astramaya.id. SNA (Social Network Analysis) is a research method that focuses on how to see relationships and provide an overview or results in the form of individual information (Wu & Duan, 2015). SNA (Social Network Analysis) in this study is limited to social media Twitter and mainstream media

that participate in the Covid-19 pandemic discourse. Twitter was chosen as the object with the consideration that contestation between actors occurs massively on Twitter social media. Twitter has the power to capture the masses and spread discourse across space and time. The data collection procedure begins by setting keywords, namely: pandemic, covid-19, and vaccine. The data was taken from July 2019 to July 2021 with the consideration that this period is right with the increasing cases of the Covid-19 pandemic and efforts to solve it, such as vaccination. After the data is collected, the researcher performs data reduction so that the data obtained is in accordance with the objectives and formulation of the research problem.

Data analysis

Data analysis in this study was carried out qualitatively based on SNA (Social Network Analysis). SNA (Social Network Analysis) is a method that aims to find out about how the contestation is between actors and see how the relationship is (relationship). In addition, SNA (Social Network Analysis) is also used to observe and analyze social structures through networks (Rousseau, 2014). The network or network here is not the same as the definition in computer studies and science but is interpreted as a form of analysis of relationships (relationships) between individual actors, groups or things in the network.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION
Network of Actors in the Discourse of the Covid-19 Pandemic

The Covid-19 debate on social media has an actor and discourse structure that is completely different from other discourses

such as the discourse on the 2019 Election. In the contestation of the 2019 Election discourse, the polemic forms ideological fractions between actors on Twitter, namely pro-state nationalist groups, nationalists the left, and Islamist groups with opinions according to their respective ideologies to correct the basic assumptions of the issues raised by the presidential candidates, such as issues of food, infrastructure, radicalism and energy, so that they are more aligned according to the ideals of each group (Santoso, 2021; Santoso et al., 2020).
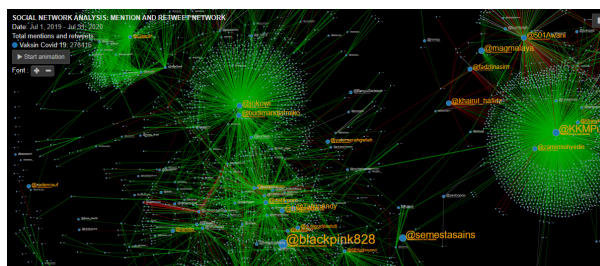

Figure 1. Social Network Analysis of Actor Networks in the Covid-19 Pandemic Discourse

In the contested discourse on the Covid-19 vaccine, fragmentation between actors occurs due to differences in ideal needs of life amidst the socio-economic impact of the pandemic, rather than fundamental ideological differences. Since vaccines are an important commodity for socio-economic recovery, vaccine discourse has more resonance for actors and social classes that are close to face-to-face and commercial activities. In July 2020, opposition actors who in the last two years have paid attention to issues of democracy, human rights, the Omnibus Law and civil liberties, were less engaged in the vaccine discourse in cyberspace. When the pandemic entered 2020, they paid intense attention to the steps of the political elite, in addition to paying attention to the

problem of pro-poor student education policies affected by the pandemic.

Actor contestation on actor networks in the Covid-19 pandemic discourse (Figure 1) is divided into three main actor clusters, namely the government cluster, the scientist and buzzer cluster, and the popular scientific information provider actor cluster. The @Jokowi account is the core magnet of the government cluster. In this discourse contest, even though government agency accounts such as the Ministry of Health and the Covid-19 Task Force also attract high trust from the public, the @ Jokowi account has the highest interaction. Differences in discourse genres between government actors are related to the level of community engagement in the discourses that are built. In this context, even though the Ministry of Health and the Covid-19 Task Force are the frontline agencies, the Ministry of Health's Twitter home page is composed of brief information on Covid-19 calls and uploads of other health issues in general. Meanwhile, the home page of the Covid-19 Task Force contains updated statistical information about the pandemic.

Figure 2. Discourse of Covid-19 on Jokowi's Twitter timeline

The @Jokowi account, as an individual representative with the highest authority, publishes government policy agendas in dealing with Covid-19. Jokowi uses Twitter to publish what is important and a priority for the government during a pandemic. In July 2020, a number of policies have been implemented including the deployment of influencers to increase tourism (March 2020), the inauguration of physical and social restrictions (March 2020), the implementation of regional Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB) (March 2020), the prohibition of going home (April 2020), Pre-Employment Cards for residents affected by the pandemic (April 2020), socialization of New Normal life (May 2020), formation of the Covid-19 Task Force and National Economic Recovery Committee (July 2020), plans for mass production of Eucayptus-based antivirus necklaces (July 2020) (Apriliyanti et al., 2022).

Note Apriliyani et. al regarding the history of government policies during the pandemic, has a discourse in harmony with Jokowi's Twitter uploads (Figure 2). Economy, health, and development are the dominant discourses on Jokowi's Twitter timeline. Jokowi articulated economic issues through an overview of the macro impact on national conditions and an overview of the micro impact faced by the wider community. The capacity frame and potential for economic recovery are emphasized to tell the impact of the national economy. Meanwhile, framing microeconomic impacts with populist policies, such as general assistance and pre-employment.
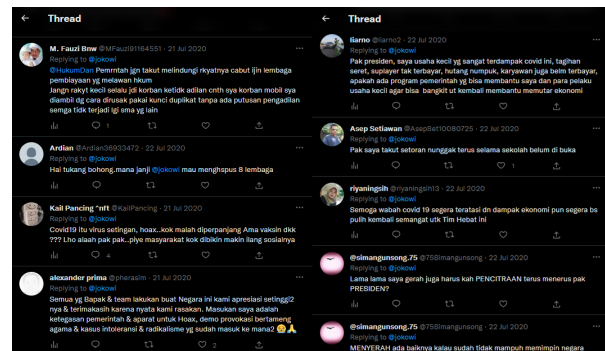
Figure 3. Community Comments with Social Class Nuances in Jokowi's Uploads

During a global debate about whether health or the economy should be a country's priority in dealing with a pandemic, the Indonesian government's tendency towards the economy has drawn a lot of criticism from activists, epidemiologists, academics and students. The four of them met on concerns over the neglect of human rights and health rights by the government when the economy was still being prioritized even during the pandemic moment. Activists and several observers see that the neglect of human rights to health during a pandemic is the continuation of a series of similar neglects of economic and development priorities that have been going on long before the pandemic.

However, this substantive debate took place through the platforms of media columns and discussion forums. Since Jokowi's Twitter timeline contains economic discourse and entrepreneurial stimuli, people have poured out their daily income grievances in Jokowi's Twitter comments column (Picture 3). Some users also think that the publication of policies on the Twitter timeline is just imagery. Even though the two discourses are different, both are under one umbrella problem, namely the class problem, where the

economic impact of the pandemic has put them at risk of experiencing a decline in social mobility.

Expert vs Anti-Science

The second cluster is a cluster formed from contestation between experts and the public. In contrast to the government cluster, where economic, health and development discourses sparked responses to social class discourse, the people in this second cluster are composed of groups with a need for credible information and groups anti-science. @DirgaRambe, or Dirga Sakti Rambe, is a doctor at RMC PuloMas Hospital and the founder of Imuni_ID, a home vaccination medical service, is the epicenter of the discourse. Even though his interactions are smaller than @blackpink828, Dirga Rambe's interactions are organic, since @blackpink828 is a bot account which has been deactivated at the time of writing this. Dirga Rambe uploaded medical answers regarding public confusion about certain problems and facts on his Twitter timeline. He provided outreach and medical advice, especially regarding the situation in July 2020 when large-scale social restrictions (PSBB) were implemented.

In this period, several experts, both from epidemiologists and medicine, began to open their voices and try to take leadership in public discourse on concerns about the development of the virtual world situation (The Jakarta Post, 2020). Dirga Rambe is one of a group of experts who has succeeded in gaining popularity in cyberspace. His Twitter account has 84.2 thousand followers (followers). The high number of needs for credible information also encourages increased public engagement with medical experts. On his Twitter timeline, Dirga Rambe presents these needs, both in the form of explanations, clarifications, and medical advice during a situation where vaccine certainty is not yet available and government policies are constantly evolving (Picture 4).
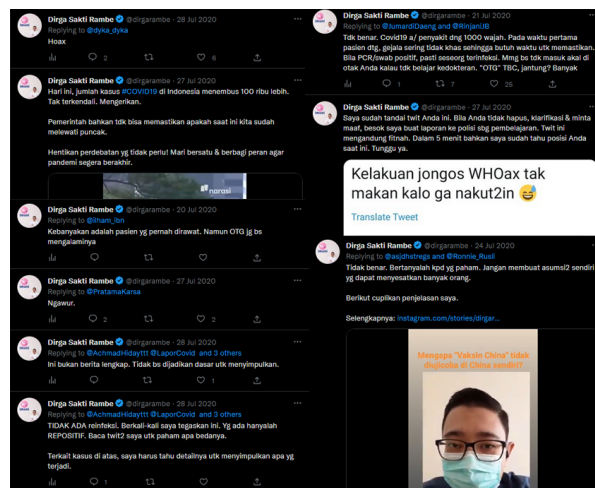
Figure 4. Dirga Rambe's Twitter Timeline

However, medical experts are not free from hoax attacks and anti-science discourse. Dirga Rambe is no exception. Even though Dirga Rambe's social network analysis (SNA) relationships show positive sentiment (green line), the debate with anti-science discourse still occurs in the mass line. The packaging of words and replies according to the formal conventions of expertise raises confrontation but is present as something positive. In this context, the relationship between experts and hoax actors or anti-science actors is more of a debunking activity than an information warfare activity.

Public and Popular Science

The third cluster is composed of actors providing popular scientific information (@

Sementasains), foreign figures (@khairul_hafidz), and the Malaysian Ministry of Health (@KKMPutrajaya). Even though @KKMPutrajaya has the largest network of relationships, its relationships are limited to domestic interactions of Twitter users in Malaysia. Like the Indonesian Ministry of Health, @KKMPutrajaya broadcasts public information about basic health such as basic information about Covid-19, the importance of healthy eating, the urgency of maintaining cleanliness, and reminders of important health days.

Meanwhile, popular scientific accounts have a close relationship with the dynamics of discourse in Indonesia. @Semestasains presents popular scientific content such as the world of animals, microorganisms, natural facts, and so on. The Covid-19 pandemic has indirectly stimulated popular scientific accounts to present light information about the Corona virus. However, it is this popular information that bridges the Indonesian public and the Malaysian public. @khairul_hafidz also connects the Malaysian and Indonesian public, since he is a Malaysian citizen with the alma mater of Padjadjaran University, Bandung, Indonesia. In other words, Malaysian actors also have a role in the dynamics of the Covid-19 discourse in Indonesia.

In July 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic intensified, public attention was divided into discourse derivatives from events related to the pandemic, resulting in overlapping discourses on one news platform. Several mainstream media have high exposure, but not necessarily the same high engagement (See: Figure 5 and Figure 6). Social networks of several second-class media (@kumparan and @geloraco) have dominant interactions, but with negative sentiment, while first-class media (@kompas and tempo.co) have less interaction despite having higher exposure (Figure 6). In research entitled Topics, Trends, and Sentiments of Tweets About the COVID-19 Pandemic: Temporal Invigilance Study, it was found that Covid-19 encourages negative sentiment as well as positive sentiment. Negative sentiment refers to the themes of the spread and growth of cases, symptoms, racism, the source of the outbreak, and the political impact of COVID-19. On the other hand, positive sentiment emerged on the themes of prevention, impact on the economy and markets, government response, impact on the health services industry, and treatment and recovery(Chandrasekaran et al., 2020).

Name	Account Name	Engagements	Posts	Retweets	Replies	Followers	Impact
Kompas.com	kompascom	58	54	0	4	8,130,679	471,579,382
detikcom	detikcom	24	24	0	0	16,840,219	404,165,256
Liputan6.com	liputan6dotcom	48	48	0	0	3,947,105	189,461,040
VIVAcoid	VIVAcoid	19	19	0	0	4,344,656	82,548,464
METRO TV	Metro_TV	7	2	5	0	10,693,967	74,857,769
TEMPO.CO	tempodotco	36	33	3	0	1,767,731	63,638,316
detikHealth	detikHealth	31	31	0	0	1,818,861	56,384,691
Media Indonesia	mediaindonesia	29	29	0	0	1,516,035	43,965,015

Figure 5. The most influential mainstream media in the Covid-19 discourse.

Figure 6. Mainstream Media Actor Network, Buzzer and Influencer

Figure 6 shows that mainstream media is connected to several intellectual accounts (@ShamsiAli2, Director of Jamaica Muslim Center, USA), buzzers (@dafunkdapunk, @SilumanRi, @wedhus999), and influencers (@SridianaEva, @katzen_jammer, traveler and cooking enthusiast; @dr_koko28, Andi Khomeini Takdir, Internal Medicine Specialist; and others). Discourse rotation in this cluster follows the principle of market of attention, where the main capital of mainstream media is the power of content, while buzzers use active interaction mode, and influencers use number of followers capital.

Figure 7. @Dr_Koko28's Timeline: Vertical Discourse on the Government (Left) And Public Opinion in The Comments Column (Right).

As shown in Figure 6, mainstream media has a much wider reach than buzzers and influencers, but buzzers can interact massively in their targeted media networks. Meanwhile, influencers can reach public opinion thanks to the number of followers they have. @katzen_jammer for example, even though he defines himself as a traveler and cooking enthusiast, he can have quite a striking echo of Covid-19 among other relevant actors on the Twitter discourse market because of his 24.6 thousand followers. @dr_koko28 with 209.8 thousand followers on Twitter can echo information,

explanations, health appeals, and personal views on handling the pandemic. Unlike Dirga Rambe, @dr_koko28 is trying to build a vertical discourse by rolling out content about how the government should handle Covid-19. Content with vertical discourse is welcomed by other users and reflects various attitudes towards the pandemic.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this research is to explore the power struggle and contestation of actors in the discourse of the Covid-19 pandemic. Actor contestation in the discourse of the Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia forms a network of actors and discourse themes that are related to one another. Actor contestation in actor networks in the Covid-19 pandemic discourse is divided into three main actor clusters, namely the government cluster, the scientist and buzzer cluster, and the popular scientific information provider cluster. In presidential and public relations, actor contestation is formed from policy discourse and social complaints about risks poverty. Jokowi as one of the central actors in pioneering a discourse on how to handle a pandemic. Although activists, students, and several experts provide ideological criticism, which is present in the form of expressions of social class. The discourse on Covid-19 that was built by the actors was split into two, between actors who produced discourse on health information and facts, and actors who produced discourse on health as well as reflections on the performance of the handling of the pandemic by the government of the Republic of Indonesia. The first actor, although only presenting facts without

opinions, is more attractive to virtual or buzzer audiences. Meanwhile, other actors are said to be more capable of attracting more political public opinion.

At the level of discourse contestation in the media, the mainstream media competes with buzzers and influencers. In this contest, buzzers are more focused on attacking politically with news frames and presenting alternative narratives. Through news, mainstream media actors have discourse connected with discourses produced by influencer actors. This research found that the contestation between actors and discourse on Covid-19 in Indonesia runs asymmetrically. The ideological weighted contest that should occur in the government, occurs between the mainstream media, influencers, and buzzers. Meanwhile, actor contestation and discourse containing pragmatic topics occur between the government and society. Our research shows that the role of the buzzer to engineer policy support in a certain direction is still ongoing, especially in the discourse on the Covid-19 pandemic.

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