

Problems of Communication and Health Information for Elderly Women during the Covid-19 Pandemic

Case Study of Health Information Search for Elderly Women in Bandung

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ABSTRACT

Like mushrooms that grow in the rainy season, the health information that was scattered during the Covid-19 pandemic is also growing rapidly and going fast all the time. Transfer of health information about the Covid-19 case can be accessed easily by anyone and anywhere through digital media in their respective devices. Hoax in health information is not a strange thing anymore, so it is difficult to distinguish the truth from real information. This communication problem is being experienced by society, especially among elderly women in Bandung. This phenomenon has attracted the attention of the author to examine more deeply with the following research objectives: 1) knowing the process of seeking health information for elderly women during the Covid-19 pandemic in Bandung; 2) knowing the reasons for the communication process and the selection of media and health information used by these elderly women. In this case, the uniqueness of the research lies in the research subject, where the category of elderly women with various physical and mental health conditions they experience must face exposure to health information during the Covid-19 pandemic. This study uses a case study method by interviewing 5 selected informants in this research. The results of the research were found to contribute thoughts in the study of health communication in the digital era that occurred during the Covid-19 pandemic. The findings of this study include the following, (1) the process of searching for health information carried out by informants during the Covid-19 pandemic is unique because it varies through word of mouth and digital media, with information content about various herbal / traditional treatments; (2) the reason for the search for health information is an effort to contain the spread of covid-19, a form of self-awareness and to prevent exposure to covid-19.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Covid-19 pandemic phenomenon that has hit Indonesia since March 2020 last

year until now has had an impact on various aspects of human life, from children to the elderly. Information about the Covid-19

pandemic has flooded the mass media, this was also revealed by one online media which described communication problems during the Covid-19 pandemic. The rapid flow of information about the Covid-19 pandemic in an era that John Keane calls communication abundance has given rise to many communication events that have attracted public attention. Some of the various pandemic information circulating widely in society is true, but quite a few of the facts are doubtful or even hoaxes, making the public even more panicked and even anxious and creating uncertainty or unpredictability [1].

Communication problems during the Covid-19 pandemic were experienced by the majority of people in the world. This is demonstrated by several previous studies that confirm communication problems in the world.

As is known, the Ministry of Communication and Information as part of the Task Force for the Acceleration of Handling Covid-19 recorded at least an infodemic in the form of hoaxes or incorrect information about Covid-19 in Indonesia reaching 566 cases [2].

The novel disease Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-2019) has gripped the world with fear, anxiety and confusion, and it is spreading as fast as the virus. With limited age-disaggregated data available, early indications are that the virus, like most other viruses in the past, is particularly severe in older people. Public health managers tend to monitor and evaluate epidemic responses by looking at overall mortality rates and, where available, specific mortality rates among 'healthy' children and adults.

[3] has strengthened the author in raising this research topic. "Seniors during the Pandemic and the Potential for Neglect" as an article written by Sari Handayani reveals that the elderly group is the most vulnerable group during the pandemic. According to Handayani, the group most affected by exposure to the Covid-19 virus. The physical vulnerability of the elderly needs special attention considering that they, especially those from the working class, still have to work outside the home so the risk of infection

is very high [4]. This can be the foundation for the importance of raising the profile of informants in the elderly category, in this case the researchers chose elderly women.

Despite this, older people in general have been identified as having a higher vulnerability to the impact of the epidemic. This may be due to their weakening immunity, partly due to the physiology of the aging process and more specifically due to existing comorbid conditions [5].

This communication problem is currently being experienced by society, especially elderly women in Bandung. This phenomenon attracted the author's attention to research more deeply with the following research objectives: 1) to determine the process of searching for health information for elderly women during the Covid-19 pandemic in Bandung; 2) find out the reasons for the communication process and choice of media and health information used by elderly women.

In this case, the uniqueness of the research lies in the research subject, where the category of elderly women with various physical and mental health conditions had to face exposure to health information during the Covid-19 pandemic. This research uses a case study method by interviewing in depth the 5 informants selected in this research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

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[6] who conducted previous research on Covid-19 health information explained that the current COVID-19 virus pandemic has resulted in a request for psychiatric assistance. India has ~8000 mental health professionals mostly in urban areas. Older adults do not have easy access to mental health professionals. They are prone to feelings of loneliness and helplessness. They fear that even if they survive the pandemic, the social order will change. Some fear worsening morbidity and reduced quality of life (Vahia, V. N., & Shah 2020).

3. METHODS

This research was conducted using a qualitative approach and case study method. This is based on the research objective which will highlight the problems of communication and health information experienced by informants during the Covid-19 pandemic. Based on the literature referred to by [7], the case study method is a research method that explores, uncovers a unique case in depth and comprehensively.

The uniqueness of this research lies in the research subject, where the author raises the category of elderly women who look at their physical and mental health conditions, especially in facing the search for health information during the Covid-19 pandemic. The data collection techniques that have been carried out in this research are:

1. Literature Study, this technique is used by the author to look for various references to previous research or similar research to the author's research topic.
2. In-depth interviews
3. Observation/Observation

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research results found contribute to thinking in the study of health

communication in the digital era that occurred during the Covid-19 pandemic. The findings of this research include the following, (1) the process of searching for health information carried out by informants during the Covid-19 pandemic is unique because it varies through word of mouth and digital media, with information content regarding various herbal/traditional treatments; (2) the reason the process of searching for health information is carried out is as an effort to overcome the spread of Covid-19, as a form of introspection and to prevent exposure to Covid-19.

1. The process of searching for health information during the Covid-19 pandemic

Based on the results of the research that has been carried out, the author can reveal that the informant's process of searching for health information during the Covid-19 pandemic was unique. This is because informants still prioritize health information that comes from direct, mouth-to-mouth, conversations with other people. Even though the Covid-19 pandemic limited movement and travel activities, this did not limit the process of searching for health information needed by informants.

One of the informants, IN, a woman who works as a housewife, said that direct chat from trusted sources, for example relatives or health workers, is an accurate source for getting as much information as possible about preventing the spread of Covid-19. This was conveyed in the following interview excerpt:

"If you look for information from the right sources, especially if it's about health, we stay healthy and protected from the Covid-19 virus, so you have to get information from health workers, talking directly is the easiest way for mothers to understand, you can do it by telephone, or if maybe we'll find it, we still prioritize health protocols too."

This statement shows that being an elderly woman still does not hinder the process of seeking health information about preventing Covid-19. This is one of the

author's findings which reveals the importance of health information literacy for all groups, in this case including elderly women.

In contrast to IN, another informant, namely DM, is a Civil Servant, even though he is no longer in the productive age range, he still tries to search for health information through digital media. The following is an excerpt from the interview:

"I think health information is now easier to obtain with digital media, yes social media, or other credible sources on the internet, right? "For example, via our cellphones, so if you want to know the latest developments regarding Covid-19, you can access it on digital media. Moreover, with the addition of the WhatsApp social media group, there will be more health information about Covid-19 itself."

The explanation above shows that there are differences with what was conveyed by the first informant regarding the process of searching for health information. The author sees that even among elderly women, there are those who make optimal use of social media or digital media which can be accessed via their respective devices. This is also interesting to analyze further, especially if you look at the age category, educational background, and even the culture held by the informants.

Meanwhile, another informant, MN who is an entrepreneur, also said the same thing as the first informant. The health information sought is through an interpersonal communication process, namely direct chat from relatives and neighbors who are also health workers in nearby places. MN acknowledged this as a process of searching for health information carried out to find out how to prevent the spread of Covid-19. Moreover, as a trader, MN also said that traditional medicines as an antidote to the spread of Covid-19 also became the health information he obtained through the communication process. The following is MN's complete statement from the interview that was conducted:

"Mothers often chat directly, especially since mothers can't use the internet

or social media, so I'm more confident if I just chat, so I can get a lot of health information from neighbors, there are those who work as health workers too. So, it's better to just ask from the source."

If we observe the statement above, the author sees that the uniqueness of this research shows that the informants, in this case elderly women, have their own way of deciding to search for health information related to the spread of Covid-19. This was explained by three informants who had different professions, but were included in the informant category as elderly women. The results of the interviews also revealed that informants varied in their implementation of actions to handle Covid-19.

As another effort, the author also conducted a literature study on credible sources from the Indonesian Ministry of Health (2021) which stated that health information about preventing the spread of Covid-19 is very important for the elderly to know. Vigilance for this vulnerable group of elderly people is also a concern in handling Covid-19 as stated in the Circular Letter of the Minister of Home Affairs number 440/2622/SJ concerning the Establishment of a Task Force for the Acceleration of Handling Corona Virus (Covid-19) on 29 March 2020, which contains:

1. Regional Governments must ensure that the elderly group (seniors) receive socialization and personal protection, understand care steps, hand hygiene requirements, for example: avoid sharing personal items; pay attention to ventilation; and implementing disinfectant measures (Ministry of Health 2021).
2. When the elderly have suspicious symptoms such as fever, cough, sore throat, chest tightness, dyspnea (shortness of breath), fatigue, nausea and vomiting, diarrhea, conjunctivitis (red eyes), muscle pain, etc. The following steps

should be taken: self-quarantine/isolation and avoid close contact with others; Health status should be assessed by medical staff and those with abnormal health conditions will be transferred to medical institutions. Wearing a mask is highly recommended on the way to the hospital, avoiding using public transportation (if possible), and immediately registering and receiving medical observation and not having contact with other people; people who have close contact with suspected cases must receive special supervision; reducing unnecessary gatherings, dinner parties, and other groups; if any elderly person with symptoms suspicious of being diagnosed with COVID-19, those in close contact should receive medical observation for 14 days. After the patient leaves (such as hospitalization, death, etc.); residential rooms and possibly contaminated materials should be applied timely disinfection procedures; special disinfection procedures must be operated or instructed by professionals from the Local Government, or qualified third parties; and living quarters without disinfection are not recommended for use.

The illustration above is an illustration that shows the urgency regarding the importance of health information regarding the prevention of Covid-19 for the elderly group. As a priority group that must be considered in efforts to prevent the spread of Covid-19 in Indonesia. Therefore, through the results of this research, the author can find out the content of health information in preventing Covid-19 carried out by the informants, who are included in the category of elderly women.

2. Reasons for seeking health information in dealing with the spread of Covid-19

In further findings, the author also tried to find out the reasons for searching for health information in dealing with the spread of Covid-19 carried out by elderly women. If we refer to one of the findings from previous researchers regarding social support for the elderly, the author can see that the elderly category can also vary in responding to their search for health information.

As stated by [8], in providing social assistance to elderly informants, the companion can teach the elderly and their families. For elderly people who are neglected because they live alone at home, social assistants must be able to mobilize social support groups in their environment. Meanwhile, the form of DKJPS for household-based elderly people is regulation. The theoretical implication of writing this article is that elderly people are said to be mentally healthy not only because they are protected from symptoms of mental disorders and illnesses, but are related to active adjustments in facing and overcoming problems with new conditions [8]. This means that active self-adjustment can encourage informants to overcome the problems they experience during the Covid-19 pandemic. This is what the author observed happened to the author's informants in this research.

Referring to the results of this research, the author also revealed the reasons for the informants' search for health information in dealing with the spread of Covid-19. In this case, reflecting on the various cases that have occurred, some say there are conspiracy theories or their disbelief in Covid-19. However, what is unique about this research is that the author also found informants, namely elderly women who were interested in exploring various information in dealing with the spread of Covid-19. This is shown by the statement of the informant, IN, who clearly conveyed the reasons.

"Mother is alert, she wants to find as much health information as possible about preventing Covid-19, so that we are not exposed to the outbreak. We have to make an

effort too, the main thing is that if you already know it, you can put it into practice. Health protocols, healthy food, like herbal medicine to increase the body's immunity. Who doesn't want everyone's family to stay healthy? That's what you do too, bismillah okay..."

IN's statement was also complemented by other informants who had similar views regarding the importance of health information. As an active user of digital media via gadgets, MN always tries to find the latest information about preventing the spread of Covid-19 through his gadgets.

"I just use technology that is held in my hand, I use Google, it's actually easier, we know a lot about developments like that, right? This is a way to make good and correct

use of digital media. "Right now, if you want to know any information, you can do it on the internet, all you have to do is browse on Google, I'm also trying to find information about how to prevent Covid-19, especially since I'm already elderly, so I have to be more alert."

Based on the quote above, the author sees another point explained by the informant regarding the main reason for seeking health information. The author tries to explain the findings of this research in the form of a table below.

Table 1. Health Information Search Category in Preventing Covid-19 for Elderly Women

No	Results	Health Information	Source
1	"Health protocols, healthy food, like herbal medicine to increase the body's immunity. Who doesn't want everyone's family to stay healthy? That's what you do too, bismillah okay..."	Herbal treatment as prevention of Covid-19	Health worker
2	"Mum is alert, I want to find as much health information as possible about preventing Covid-19, so that we don't get exposed to the outbreak."	Implementation of health protocols to prevent Covid-19	Credible Source
3.	"I just use technology that is held in my hand, I use Google, it's actually easier, we also know a lot about developments like that."	Information about Covid19	Media online/ google
4.	"So, if you want to know the latest developments regarding Covid-19, you can access it on this digital media. Moreover, with the WhatsApp social media group, there is more health information about Covid-19 itself."	Information about Covid19	Social media Whatsapp group, media online/ google

(Source : Result, of Research, 2021)

Based on the findings above, the author can see that the search for health information about preventing Covid-19 carried out by informants can also be categorized according to the information content and information sources used by the informants. Even though the informants are in the elderly category, there are still those who are accustomed to using health information literacy in digital media.

Meanwhile, in other literature, the author found that there were researchers who revealed Covid-19 information that was ignored by the public. [9] have revealed cases of residents who underestimate the threat of Covid-19. More than one Italian over the age of five still underestimates the threat of Covid-19. This is one of the key results that emerged from a recent survey conducted by Observa Science in Society Monitor. The

monitor analyzes in the first place the information exposure. The majority of Italians get their information about emergencies mainly through TV news and radio (52%). The second major source was institutional websites, such as the Ministry of Health and regional and local institutions (20.5%). Only a small number collect information mainly through social media. Regarding preventive measures to avoid contagion, however, trust in official sources clearly prevails: indications from national and local institutions and from the GP himself are respectively the most numerous and the second most reliable sources of information [9].

[6] who conducted previous research on Covid-19 health information explained that the current COVID-19 virus pandemic has resulted in a request for psychiatric assistance. India has ~8000 mental health professionals mostly in urban areas. Older adults do not have easy access to mental health professionals. They are prone to feelings of loneliness and helplessness. They fear that even if they survive the pandemic, the social order will change. Some fear worsening morbidity and reduced quality of life [6].

The deaths reported so far from the current pandemic are less than those during the Spanish Flu of 1918, in which 17 to 18 million Indians died from the disease. However, an economic recession has occurred in the wake of the current pandemic. Mass unemployment and/or reduced wages will disrupt the quality of family life and feelings of insecurity will arise. Traditionally, urban metros are used to provide economic security. The COVID-19 pandemic has eliminated that security. Those who migrate backward to their hometowns are likely to receive support from family and neighbors. Older adults who have to live in metros are required to deal with loneliness, anxiety, and depression. To date, we do not have the numbers of those who have migrated or the appropriate strategies activated by older adults to reduce feelings of loneliness, anxiety and depression [6].

Apart from these two research literatures which are relevant to the author's research topic, the author has also found the informants' reasons for searching for health information in preventing Covid-19. Data revealed by [6], [9] occurred outside Indonesia, which shows that the elderly category is also a top priority that must be protected from the spread of Covid-19. Meanwhile, in other cases, the author also succeeded in revealing the categories of reasons for seeking health information in preventing Covid-19 by the informants.

Based on these findings, the author can explain the various reasons for seeking health information in preventing Covid-19 for elderly women. If observed, this is motivated by several factors that can be studied in terms of communication barriers. In the final section, the author will discuss this from the analysis of communication barriers. Apart from that, an interesting important finding in this research is that the category of reasons put forward by informants is not merely information on the development of Covid-19 or efforts to prevent Covid-19, but this is emphasized as a form of vigilance or introspection on the part of the informants. Therefore, in this case the informants conveyed their reasons for seeking various health information, but if you observe carefully, this becomes the basis for a form of introspection about the efforts that the informants should make in the future.

Analysis of Communication Barriers

In this section, the author wants to explain the reasons behind the diversity of reasons for searching for health information about Covid-19 prevention by informants. There are several factors that underlie this, as revealed by various previous studies. One thing WHO (2020) has said is that Covid-19 is more than just a health crisis; it is also a form of information and socio-economic crisis. The pandemic and related responses prompted the deepest global recession in almost a century and pushed an estimated 70-100 million more people into extreme poverty [10].

Other researchers discuss the phenomenon of communication barriers related to the impact of Covid-19 on women. This was expressed by [11] who found that poverty occurs in women due to restrictions on social activities and behavior in society, resulting in a decrease in family income which has an impact on women's poverty. Women are a vulnerable group to survive the Covid-19 pandemic without support from adequate facilities and skills in mastering information technology, so it is difficult for women to build and produce a creative economy. Even during the Covid-19 pandemic, the players' creative economy was able to survive the downturn in economic conditions. Conscious efforts are needed for these women to rise and increase their skills in mastering technology in building a creative economy [11].

Based on the two pieces of literature above, the author sees differences with what the author found in this research. In essence, the impact of Covid-19 which spreads in various aspects of life as expressed by [10], [11] strengthens the existence of aspects of communication barriers which are the background to research informants expressing various reasons for searching for health information on preventing Covid-19. Some of these factors are as follows:

1. Social factors

In this factor, the author sees the influence of social elements possessed by the informants. For example, if informants come from a community that is characterized by liking to socialize either directly or through the media, then information can spread quickly, namely via Whatsapp Group, telephone or other online media.

2. Educational factor

The second factor behind the informant is the element of education. Informants who are still working, have knowledge related to health literacy, are active in associations, or other things, are certainly different from informants who are not working and have low health literacy. For example, informants who are still working are more active in using digital media as a means

of searching for health information about preventing Covid-19.

3. Cultural factors

The third factor is the existence of cultural elements that developed in the area, as a place where various informants lived. This could also be the reason for searching for health information on preventing Covid-19 for elderly women.

These three factors are the results of the analysis obtained by the author in terms of the reasons why the informants searched for health information on preventing Covid-19 which proved to be varied. Other recent research that is still related to the author's findings is that women's family responsibilities continue to increase during the Covid-19 pandemic.

[12] revealed interesting findings regarding women's increasing family responsibilities during the Covid-19 pandemic. This has led to domestic violence, intimate partner violence (IPV), mental health problems, and a high risk of violence against children, especially girls. This study found that the pandemic can create new realities in gender-based relations in the household, namely: building new constructions of gender relations; from gender equality to justice in gender-based power relations; changing parenting responsibilities from relying on the mother to being a collective responsibility of the parents; the need to improve organization and regulation for a fair division of labor in work and home care [12].

However, various different perspectives on the Covid-19 pandemic certainly provide complementary, interrelated references. In this author's research, what strengthens is how important it is to know the search for health information on preventing Covid-19 made by informants, namely elderly women.

5. CONCLUSION

The conclusions in this research include the following: (1) The process of searching for health information carried out by informants during the Covid-19 pandemic

varied through word of mouth and digital media, with information content regarding various herbal/traditional treatments; (2) The reason the process of searching for health information is carried out is as an effort to overcome the spread of Covid-19, as a form of introspection and to prevent exposure to Covid-19.

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