Policy Development for handling COVID-19 from the Perspective of a Policy Narrative Framework

by PASCASARJANA UIR

Policy Development for handling COVID-19 from the Perspective of a Policy Narrative Framework

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ARTICLE INFORMATION

ABSTRACT

The spread of the covid-19 outbreak entered Indonesia since 2020. COVID-19 has had an impact on society and government, so that the government, especially the city of Pekanbaru, has carried out various policy strategies to carry out countermeasures in the spread of Covid-19, but the number of spread of covid-19 still has not decreased significantly. This research aims to develop a policy narrative framework that functions in advocating for the media as well as providing influence in the decision/policy making process. This research used qualitative analysis using the Policy Narrative Framework (NPF) approach. This study found that narratives by government actors and the general public in online news media had an influence on the policy of handling Covid-19. The policy narrative framework approach (NPF) contributes to this research such as elements of the storyline of policy development and the role of actors who are directly involved in policy. The implementation of the COVID-19 vaccine program through social media support can be seen from the existence of four indicators, namely Communication, Resources, Disposition, and Bureaucratic Structure and looking at the message sender's, recipient and quality of message via social media.

INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 first appeared in the city of Wuhan, Hubei Province, China, at the end of 2019, quickly spreading throughout the world (WHO, 2020). Health Scientists provide an explanation of the Corona virus outbreak, which has an impact on the acute respiratory system and is then called COVID-19. Common symptoms include fever, dyspepsia, pain, a dry cough, and shortness of breath. COVID-19 has an impact on death with symptoms of respiratory failure and multiorgan dysfunction (Sohrabi et al., 2020; Weible et al., 2020).

The first time the COVID-19 case entered Indonesia, it was officially announced by the president in early 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic is still relatively new, so the government does not yet have a COVID-19 management system (Djalante et al., 2020). Besides that, there is also no policy that responds to the COVID-19 case, causing panic among people nationally. No one has been able to figure out how to deal with this pandemic quickly (Olivia et al., 2020).

The COVID-19 outbreak has made the government work hard to contain its spread. A pattern of non-natural disaster mitigation based on the principles of transparency and accountability is urgently needed to increase public confidence in the government's seriousness about overcoming the COVID-19 problem. The criticism of the government is getting louder so that in dealing with the problem of the spread of COVID-19, there can be more transparency. As an unprecedented global non-natural disaster, namely the COVID-19 pandemic, it forces policy actors to study this phenomenon while simultaneously making effective policies (Biswas Mellamphy et al., 2022).

Online media is a means of information that is the public's choice for accessing developments in COVID-19. News via online media is also the fastest and most accessible means for the public during times when the policy of leaving the house is restricted. The media is also known as the right tool to influence public discourse as well as give effect to the policies produced by the government (public discourse literature). This research focuses on analyzing how policy actors formulate and communicate narratives through online news media to influence policy. In supporting the achievement of these objectives, we use the Policy Narrative Framework (NPF) approach as a tool for analysis. The NPF approach is often used to understand the role of narrative in the policy formulation process (Shanahan, Jones, & McBeth, 2018).

The issue of the COVID-19 outbreak is a topic that raises critical questions about the interaction between the policy narrative and the policy process. So the purpose of this research is to develop a policy narrative framework that acts as a strategy for advocating for the media and influencing policy decisions. Furthermore, specifically questioning how the role of the media is able to promote issues to be included in the agenda setting, and to what extent do policy actors narrate the COVID-19 problem in the media with the aim of influencing policy output? This article has two important objectives. First, our research contributes to the NPF literature because NPF has not been widely used to analyze narratives about issues such as natural and non-natural hazards.

This paragraph provides the arrangement of the articles among them; the second part of our article presents the literature on news media and the role of policy narrative frameworks (NPF) in exploring the policy process. The third part of this article discusses research methodology, research design, and data collection processes. The fourth part of this article presents the findings from the content analysis and interviews. The fifth and sixth sections present the research

findings. The last section of this article presents the conclusions and limitations of this study.

Digital-based social media is present in every community activity today, which makes it easier for the public to see all the more detailed information regarding disaster hazards and crises and their consequences. The public's dependence on social media information is very high; at certain moments, such as the danger of a disaster, more people choose to use online news media as a source of information (Sangari & Mashatan, 2022).

Narratives on social media are more appealing to the public than statistical evidence. Narrative plays a role in influencing a person's intention to behave, especially during moments of crisis such as the COVID-19 outbreak. Narratives also play a coping role for people who are less involved in policy issues (Gesser-Edelsburg, 2). Some community groups used internet-based social media as a source of reference for information during the COVID-19 pandemic. As more population groups use the internet as a source of health-related information (Daraz et al., 2019;), closer scrutiny and analysis of how national government announcements are received online, either proactively or reactively, is therefore appropriate.

Narratives about the COVID-19 pandemic continue to expand into the public sphere via social media (Giritli Nygren & Olofsson, 2021). The term narrative about the epidemic actually aims to describe a narrative that explains how to overcome and respond to the outbreak (Wald, 2008). So social media narratives at certain moments can be used by the government as a strategy to convey messages to its citizens (Davis et al., 2011). This article focuses on examining the policy narrative for handling COVID-19 during the pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic provides a narrative space that plays a role during the policy-making process. At moments of health crisis, narratives can help people observe these events quickly and easily (Boin et al., 2016). Narrative plays a very important role in providing information on important events (Bruner, 2003). As in the case of environmental disasters, narratives can inform political actors and society to understand and be sympathetic to these environmental problems (Rigby, 2015). In the most extreme cases, such as a group using narrative to study developments throughout an armed conflict and interpret violent activity through narrative (Zech, 2016).

The stories of local-level policy actors need to be observed because these actors actively build their narratives dynamically so that they are more in line with existing beliefs, identities, and norms (McBeth et al., 2014; McBeth et al., 2016). To broaden the understanding in this article, the author observes policy actors filling narrative space in the media to influence policy decision-making (Acharya, 2010; Rublee & Cohen, 2018).

To overcome the impact of COVID-19, the government needs to think about strategic policies in the short term and formulate policies carefully for the long term (Hoang et al., 2021). To find policies that are strategic in the long term, the government must reduce the impact on the social and economic sectors during the COVID-19 pandemic. The government must take steps to modify existing policies before COVID hits (Hale et al., 2020).

One of the countries exposed to the COVID-19 outbreak, such as Vietnam, has implemented policies for prevention and control since the beginning of the pandemic entering its country, such as restrictions on international flights, restrictions on activities outside the home for residents, policies on tracing physical contact with people with COVID-19, quarantine policies, and increasing community awareness (Van Nguyen et

al., 2021). Quarantine policies are supported by providing free accommodation during quarantine (Quach & Hoang, 2020).

The next policy occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, namely an appeal to maintain a distance of two meters between individuals, wear a mask, and limit crowds to only two people in hospitals, schools, and workplaces (Van Nguyen et al., 2021). Furthermore, the closure policy for non-essential business activities (Hai et al., 2022). In order to reduce the negative impact of physical distancing restrictions on public welfare, the government responded with various policies such as fiscal, monetary, and financial measures by governing various policy actors such as financial institutions and health care systems (Khalid et al., 2021).

The problem of the spread of COVID-19 cases and the diversity of each country's response to this can open up new research space on policies for handling COVID-19. In this article, we use a policy narrative framework as the right approach to see developments in handling policies for COVID-19.

Based on the policy narrative framework approach developed by (Jones et al., 2014;), we are interested in using this framework to analyze the development of policies for handling COVID 19. Policy narrative claimed to be able to see the development of policy stories in certain phenomena. The policy narrative is a framework that describes the general policy storyline that emerges in the discussion of a community. Elements in a policy narrative framework can help in viewing the thoughts and actions of a wider group of organizations or communities. Actions that can be analyzed from the policy narrative framework, such as efforts to limit or prohibit certain behaviors, will be effective if seen from a consistent perspective with prevailing social norms. So that the action requires policymakers to seek harmony between policy goals and social norms. Such as research by (Cook & Moore, 2002; Humphries, 2002) about policies that ask the public to reduce smoking, gambling addiction, alcohol abuse, and domestic violence.

At the time of policy formulation, the policy narrative in media is a story that is raised to influence key stakeholders and their constituents to support certain policy choices, including policies for handling COVID-19. Actors involved in media narratives have always studied policy advocacy, narrative framing techniques and psychology (Cialdini & Cialdini, 2007; Kingdon & Stano, 1984; Rochefort & Cobb, 1994; Stone, 1997).

The policy narrative framework can assist in analyzing the policy formulation process, including being able to empirically test that media narratives can play a full role in the policy process. In this research (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2018), we have tested a framework for narrative structure that is complemented by settings, plots, and characters (heroes, victims, and bullies), and the latter is complemented by the moral of the story.

Policy actors use narratives more intelligently with the aim of introducing new problems in the public space. A narrative introduction of the problem of the spread of COVID-19 is used to persuade other actors by formulating new policies for handling COVID-19. Policy makers make efforts to guide public opinion to focus on the desired policy issues by facilitating discussion space on social media (Dewulf & Bouwen, 2012; Mintrom & Luetjens, 2017). Furthermore, the narration of policy actors aims to change public references to a social phenomenon that is being faced and make arguments that can lead the public to make these changes. The NPF approach provides a more specific way of understanding social phenomena. In NPF, there are several important components, including setting, policy

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issues, characters (heroes, villains, and victims), plots, and morals or policy solutions (Shanahan, Jones, McBeth, et al., 2018). The form of the narrative is not always the same, such as a short declarative statement, in order to build more communication while creating an expansive policy narrative.

Below is an image that addresses the issue of COVID-19 in Indonesia based on the keyword COVID-19 researched by Indonesian researchers. The keywords "Covid-19" and "Policy" are sourced from Scopus data, which has been filtered based on 2020–2022.

Source: Results of Data Processing Using VOSviewer

The issue of COVID-19 is an opportunity for researchers to analyze the phenomena of non-natural disasters. There are many dimensions that can be studied, starting with the economic, social, and political policies caused by the spread of COVID-19, as shown in the data above. However, there are still relatively few who research the development of policies for handling COVID-19, so to fill the space that is still relatively small, we conduct different research by analyzing the development of policies for handling COVID-19 from a policy aspect. To see bigger data, we use analytical content about the narrative of COVID-19 in online news media. Furthermore, we use the Policy Narrative Framework (NPF) approach, which assists researchers in looking at policy actors, policy developments, and the resulting policies that are influenced by online news media in advocating for local officials.

METHOD

This study uses qualitative analysis using the Policy Narrative Framework (NPF) approach. There are three elements of the policy narrative framework used in developing research objectives: setting elements, policy stories, and policy actors. An approach is taken to analyze the policy narrative on COVID-19 in Indonesia. The scope of this research is at the mesolevel. The news media used in this study are reputable national news media, and seeing the narratives developed by advocacy groups can trigger a public response to the policies for handling COVID-19. The NPF approach has been used in non-experimental research (Shanahan, Jones, & McBeth, 2018). This study uses coding data that is processed using Nvivo 12 plus tools; the keyword "Covid-19" is used in collecting reputable

news media narratives in Pekanbaru. The coding data is then presented in a visual form, such as a graph.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Policies for Handling COVID-19 in Indonesia

The policy narrative framework approach is the most powerful element for viewing the process of formulating public policy. Narratives in the media are needed to influence government policymakers such as parliamentarians, political elites, and the public. Because facts and evidence on the ground are not enough to trigger a policy (Mintrom & O'Connor, 2020). A policy that is narrated in a structured manner and is shaped in content (Jones & McBeth, 2010) can measure the extent to which a policy is acceptable to the public (Mintrom & O'Connor, 2020). then it can measure the extent to which a policy can be accepted by the public (Mintrom & O'Connor, 2020). To see the role of media advocacy in the policy-making process, it really requires observation in every policy narrative.

In the aspect of agenda setting, the role of the media is very vital because it functions to influence policy when the media organizes public attention by addressing the priority of policy issues (Jones & Baumgartner, 2005). When certain issues have been prioritized by the media, the public will focus on paying attention to them (McCombs & Shaw, 1993). Furthermore, if the public's attention to this issue is very large, it can greatly influence the policy-making process carried out by government actors. So that our research on policies for handling COVID-19 in Indonesia is accurate, it is important to look at the way the media publishes every narrative about COVID-19.

Table 1. Regarding the Development of Policies

1	March 2020	Indonesia's first confirmed case of COVID-19.
2	March 2020	Menparekraf invites domestic and foreign influencers to promote Indonesian Tourism amid a pandemic.
3	March 2020	The government announced a social/physical distancing policy.
4	March 2020	The government has imposed a Regional PSBB (partial lockdown) full lockdown.
5	April 2020	The government has created a pre-employment card program for citizens affected by the pandemic.
6	May 2020	The government issued guidelines on a new normal for people's lives amid the high infection and death rate of COVID-
7	July 2020	The government forms the Committee for Handling COVID-19 and National Economic Recovery.
8	July 2020	The Ministry of Agriculture plans to release and mass produce an eucalyptus based antivirus which is claimed to be an effective tool in preventing the transmission of COVID-19.
9	December 2020	President Joko Widodo carried out a reshuffle and replaced the health minister who was responsible for handling the pandemic in Indonesia.
10	December 2020	The head of the Task Force for the Acceleration of Corona Disease Handling warned local leaders to reduce the use of PCR tests to increase the efficiency of the pandemic budget.
11	December 2020	The government closed the border to foreign travelers amid fears over the discovery of more the infectious variant of COVID-19 was first detected in the UK.
12	January 2021	President Joko Widodo received the first COVID-19 injection when the government started mass vaccinations.
13	February 2021	The government has allocated IDR 14.2 trillion for the recovery of the tourism sector in Indonesia.
14	March 2021	The government reopened the borders, including allowing Indian citizens to enter Indonesia in April 2021, and 9 of them tested positive for COVID-19.

Source: Collect Data from Researcher

The table above shows the development of policies taken by the government to address the COVID-19 problem in Indonesia. It can be seen that starting in March 2020, the first time that COVID-19 was confirmed in Indonesia, Furthermore, at the same time, the government made promotional efforts in the midst of COVID-19 to maintain economic stability in the tourism sector, but this promotion was faced with a policy of limiting public activities, so the government-imposed restrictions at the provincial level. People are prohibited from traveling outside the city to prevent the spread of COVID-19,

which is called PSBB. The PSBB policy is also enforced during religious activities, making it difficult for the public to go home. As a result of restrictions in various areas that have an impact on the community's economy, the government is making efforts to provide pre-employment assistance policies for residents affected by COVID-19.

The spread of COVID-19 is increasing, so the government is carrying out a new normal policy by providing guidance to the public regarding procedures for indoor and outdoor activities. The new normal policy is supported by the task force for handling COVID-19 and national economic recovery, which is given the role of supervising the implementation of the new normal policy. Furthermore, the government is making various efforts to find solutions to protect the body from the COVID-19 virus by mass-producing various herbal products. Furthermore, in December 2020, the president carried out a ministerial reshuffle, replacing the health minister who was responsible for dealing with the problem of the spread of COVID-19. To save on the budget for handling COVID-19, the government is making efforts for budget efficiency, one of which is by limiting government officials from the central government to the regions to reduce the use of PCR test kits.

Policy actors handling Covid 19

During the process of handling COVID-19, multiple actors from various government and private institutions participated. Each of these actors creates a narrative in the media with various issues regarding the handling of COVID-19. Below is the data obtained from the results of coding from reputable online news media regarding the issue of the policy for handling COVID-19, which can be seen as follows:
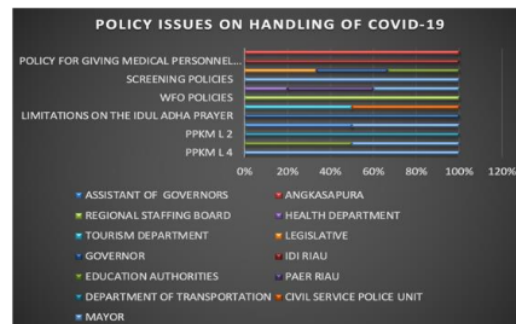

Figure 1. Policy actor hendling Covid-19
Source: Processed results of NVivo 12 Plus, 2022

The diagram above shows the results of coding on issues related to the handling of COVID-19 narrated by stakeholder actors in reputable online news media. It can be seen that a number of actors who participated in narrating the handling of COVID-19 included the Governor, DPRD Riau, the Association of Indonesian Doctors for the Riau region, Angkasa Pura II Sultan Syarif Kasim, Assistant 3 for Riau Province, Head of the Pekanbaru Education Service, Mayor of Pekanbaru, Regional Personnel Agency for Riau Province, Riau Provincial Health Office, Pekanbaru Civil Service Police Unit, and Riau Tourism Office. Furthermore, the issues regarding handling COVID-19 narrated by these actors included PPKM Level 1 to Level 4. Incentive policies for people affected by COVID-19, screening policies, WFO policies, and finally the issue of limiting Eid

prayers In this section, it is found that the actor who plays the most role in the problem of handling policy COVID-19 is the Governor of Riau. This actor is the person who is fully responsible for overcoming the problem of COVID-19 in the Riau Region, further supported by the Regional Organizational Organization, which is directly involved with the handling of COVID-19.

Development of policies for dealing with COVID-19

The development of Riau's COVID-19 handling policy, especially Pekanbaru, started in 2020 and continued until 2022. In this section, we classify issues by year. Below, you can see data on the issue of handling COVID-19 every year.
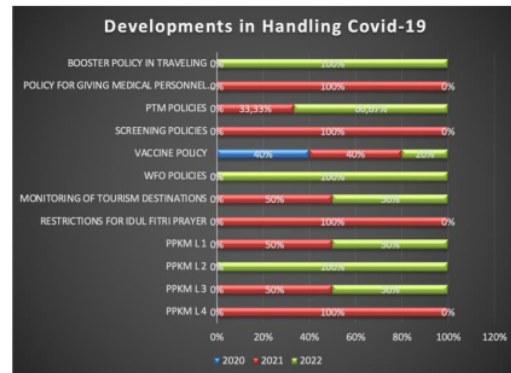

Figure 2. Policy handling Covid-19
Source: Processed results of NVivo 12 Plus, 2022

The diagram above shows the results of coding on issues related to handling COVID-19 narrated by stakeholder actors in reputable online news media. It can be seen that a number of actors who participated in narrating the handling of COVID-19 included the governor, the Riau DPRD, the Indonesian Doctors Association for the Riau region, Angkasa Pura II Sultan Syarif Kasim, Assistant 3 for Riau Province, Head of the Pekanbaru Education Service, the Mayor of Pekanbaru, the Regional Personnel Agency for Riau Province, the Riau Provincial Health Office, the Pekanbaru Civil Service Police Unit, and the Riau Tourism Office. Furthermore, the issues regarding handling COVID-19 narrated by these actors included PPKM Level 1 to Level 4. Incentive policies for people affected by COVID-19, screening policies, WFO policies, and finally the issue of limiting Eid al-Fitr prayers in this section, it is found that the actor who plays the most role in the problem of handling policy COVID-19 is the governor of Riau. This actor is the person who is fully responsible for overcoming the problem of COVID-19 in the Riau Region, further supported by the Regional Organization Organization, which is directly involved with the handling of COVID-19.

The problem of the spread of COVID-19, especially in the Pekanbaru area of Riau, has been greeted with various policies. This policy is a derivative of a national policy that is carried out by adjusting the social and environmental conditions of the people of Pekanbaru. Policies for handling COVID-19 must mainly consider both short-term and long-term effects (Hoang et al., 2021). The handling of COVID-19 as outlined in the form of policies has been adapted to conditions at the time of COVID-19, starting from planning to implementation, taking into account the economic sector and public health. Policy

modifications, as stated by (Hale et al., 2020), that the Riau government has budgeted in the APBD to adjust to the needs for handling COVID-19 include refocusing the budget for the health sector to optimize the handling of COVID-19. Policy actors from both government and private aspects are needed in handling COVID-19. The policy formulation process cannot be separated from the narratives of each of these actors. The narrative on the policy issue of handling COVID-19 can influence the government to include it on its urgent discussion agenda. The actors depicted in the diagram above show that their role has succeeded in stealing the government's attention to include it on the agenda for discussing the importance of the Riau government, especially Pekanbaru, as meant in (Dewulf & Bouwen, 2012; Mintrom & Luetjens, 2017) that policy makers make efforts to complement public opinion to focus on desired policy issues by facilitating discussion space on social media (Dewulf & Bouwen, 2012; Mintrom & Luetjens, 2017).

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study is that there is evidence that online news media advocacy influences the process of forming national and regional-level policies. The NPF policy narrative framework seeks to describe a series of processes by which issues are included in important government discussions to formulate policies for handling COVID-19. Online news media can help index a number of issues and influence the public and policymakers. The COVID-19 problem in Pekanbaru is an important ingredient in the policy-making process in an environment that is less stable. In this study, the authors found that the media can assist in the policy-making process for handling COVID-19. Several government actors, starting from the health and non-health sectors, are included as important figures in online news media. This research only looks at the development of policies for handling COVID-19 in the Pekanbaru area and is limited to collecting secondary data. Further research is needed to carry out a comparative study of each region in a province.

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