

# The Risk Communication of COVID-19

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## 4 The Risk Communication of COVID-19 Disaster Community Based Through “Keep the Village” Program

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**Abstract.** The spread of COVID-19 is increasingly massive and it involves local transmission. Facing these issues, community-based risk reduction is truly needed. This study aims to describe the society-based risk communication for COVID-19 disaster prevention through “Keep the Village” program, called *Jaga Kampung*. This study used a qualitative approach by collecting data through interviews with COVID-19 response volunteers in the *Jaga Kampung* program in Riau Province, Indonesia. This study finds out that the *Jaga Kampung* program has the aim to prevent the spread of COVID-19, maintain security stability, and protect people's food needs. The implementation of these activities involves the collaboration of communication actors from the police and the army who works in the village, village leader, village health worker, society leader, and volunteer. The officers of *Jaga Kampung* convey education and socialization of health risks humanistic and persuasively to villagers and newcomers. Communication is done through face-to-face, outdoor media, and social media such as WhatsApp, Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram. This community-based risk communication can increase society's participation in the prevention of COVID-19 so that the health and socio-economy of society is maintained.

**Keywords:** Risk communication, COVID-19, Community, Keep the village.

### 1. Introduction

The Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 24 of 2007 concerning Disaster Management places the epidemic of disease as non-natural disaster, namely the disasters caused by non-natural events or series of events [1]. The Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic is a non-natural disaster that has recently damaged people's lives. Moreover, the spread of COVID-19 is no longer between countries and regions, however, it has involved the local transmission. The risk of transmission has also begun to threaten rural societies. Facing this phenomenon, the reduction of COVID-19 risk at the society level is very essential.

Considering this pandemic situation, strong risk communication is needed especially in the affected countries [2]. Understanding risk is a systematic way of dealing with handling the hazards and insecurities [3]. Awareness of risks is the best way to prevent and slow down the transmission of the COVID-19 pandemic. Risk awareness is achieved through risk assessment communication [4]. Knowledge about risk exists in a social context and is connected to the actor's activities [5].

One way to reduce risk at the village level is through community-based prevention of COVID-19. The program to protect villages from COVID-19 is widely implemented in various regions in Indonesia, one of which is in Riau Province, with “Keep the Village” program (called *Jaga Kampung*).



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*Jaga Kampung* is a socialization and education activity aimed at preventing the transmission of COVID-19 in village areas. This concept emphasizes the importance of preventing COVID-19 through communication and educational activities by communication actors from government elements and volunteers at the village level. The *Jaga Kampung* activity is also expanded through a food security program.

COVID-19 risk communication at the village level is needed to address information gaps and misinformation. It is due to the era of social media, information related to COVID-19 can be disseminated to the wider community through various media to create private information spaces for the public [6]. As a result, the public gains information from many informal and anonymous sources whose accuracy and the fact cannot be guaranteed. Through society-based communication, the residents discover who the communicator is, can measure their credibility, so that communication on COVID-19 prevention is expected to be more effective.

Disease knowledge and awareness, in addition to risk perception, are determining factors in how people respond to and engage in preventive behavior [7]. In general, there are four objectives of risk communication: (1) Ensure that all message recipients are able to understand its content and increase their knowledge of the risks; (2) Build a trusting relationship between senders and recipients of risk messages; (3) Persuade recipients of messages to change their attitudes or behavior regarding the causes of risk; and (4) Provide space for the involvement of stakeholder which is effective on risk issues [8].

One of the important factors in disaster management is communication between the government and the affected communities. Communication should not only happen in an emergency. Indeed before a disaster, contextual communication must be needed by educating the public about the threats faced. There are three things that must be precise in communicating with the affected society, namely: (1) the content of the message (information), (2) the communication media used, and (3) the speed of sending information [9].

Effective risk communication is very important in risk management to build public confidence in the government's ability to face risks [10]. In the study of disaster risk communication in rural areas, communication is positioned as a dialogue and knowledge exchange to facilitate risk understanding and decision making. Thus, it is recommended to build existing strengths in the society, collaborative partnerships with local organizations, local media usage, empower local organizations, and accommodate the needs of rural communities [11].

Several previous studies related to COVID-19 risk communication explained that a good level of knowledge of COVID-19 indicates a high-risk perception of the disease [7]. Efficient strategies that rely on socio-economic factors in which it should be further enhanced in countries, regions, and cities with serious epidemics [15]. To develop a local-level response strategy, democratic access to information, and participatory decision-making is needed [7]. Considering the differences in response capabilities between urban and rural areas, it is imperative to develop action plans, response scenarios, and strategies to optimize the use of the equipment and human resources in the fight against COVID-19 [16]. The publicity service of Village society in preventing COVID-19 has a major impact on society [6].

Many research-related to COVID-19 prevention has not been discussed yet about society-based risk communication approaches at the village level. This study aims to describe society-based risk communication for COVID-19 prevention through the *Jaga Kampung* activity. This research is conducted to cover the research gap on COVID-19 prevention communication at the village level. The *Jaga Kampung* program is interesting to be discussed because the model of risk reduction for COVID-19 is not limited to disease transmission factors, but it also food security factors to maintain the socio-economic immunity of the society.

## 2. Method

This study used a qualitative approach by collecting data through online interviews with COVID-19 response volunteers in the *Jaga Kampung* program in Riau Province, Indonesia. The research subjects

were those involved in the *Jaga Kampung* program in the border areas. The assumption is the border area is the vulnerable area to the transmission of COVID-19. The data that had been collected, it was analyzed and presented descriptively together with secondary data from the news of mass dealing with *Jaga Kampung*.

### 3. Result and Discussion

The *Jaga Kampung* program is an implementation of the archipelago tough village program (called *Kampung Tangguh Nusantara*) [13] launched by the Chief of the Indonesian Police and the Commander of the Indonesian National Army, in the context of handling COVID-19 in the health, security and socio-economic fields. The name of the program at the regional level is adjusted to the socio-cultural community. The aim of the program is to prevent the spread of COVID-19, maintain the stability of society security, and protect food needs by empowering the land. The Indonesian Police Chief stated:

“We hope that the whole society to the RT/ RW level (neighborhood and hamlet level) will participate in preventing the transmission of COVID-19. We are optimistic that if the RT level is already strong then Indonesia will be strong.” [17]

The social movement of *Jaga Kampung* is carried out in a structured manner through the command line down to police personnel who are tasked with fostering community security and order at the village level (called *Bhabinkamtibmas*) and soldiers tasked with fostering village societies (called *Babinsa*). The implementation of these activities involves village leaders, community leaders, health workers, and village volunteers. The *Jaga Kampung* team routinely educates the public to comply with health protocols and socializes the importance of providing handwashing facilities in every home, maintaining distance, and wearing masks when going outside [18]. Apart from involving society, the *Jaga Kampung* program also links to the company's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities with society, especially to assist the production of food crops [19].

#### 3.1. *Jaga Kampung as an Educational Arena for COVID-19*

*Jaga Kampung* is said to be the front line for COVID-19 prevention at the village level. To support the implementation of Keep Village, a guard post has been established at the village entrance. The post is guarded by *Bhabinkamtibmas*, *Babinsa*, village leaders, health workers, and volunteers, alternately. The post of *Jaga Kampung* is an arena for educational activities to the public about all things related to COVID-19.

The *Jaga Kampung* team conducts educational activities on the use of masks, washing hands using soap, maintaining distance, not crowding, and other COVID-19 prevention health protocols. Education is carried out directly (face to face) with the society, through outdoor media, and through social media. Direct education through outreach to family, neighbors, and residents. Outdoor media through banners posted at various strategic points in the village. Education on social media using WhatsApp and creating creative content on Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram which is followed by the residents.

The COVID-19 educational material is provided by the Indonesian government through the COVID-19 Handling Task Force (called the COVID-19 Task Force) and can be accessed on its official website (<https://covid19.go.id>). The COVID-19 Task Force provides more than 300 educational materials aimed at groups of people at risk, the general public, parents, health workers, religious and community leaders, teachers and students, mothers and children, travelers, and business people. Educational materials in the form of narration, images, and audiovisuals, with content tailored to the target group.

Official educational materials from the COVID-19 Task Force can be downloaded and distributed to the public. In addition, parties with an interest in educating COVID-19 can modify and develop creativity in reproducing educational content. The delivery of educational messages, both face-to-face and through the media, is adjusted to the socio-cultural aspects of the community, such as the use of local languages, local social norms, local culture, and local wisdom.

The education that is most often carried out is reminding the public about the importance of washing hands and using masks. People who are not used to wearing masks often neglect not to wear



masks when they go outside. It is important that messages like this are continuously conveyed so that the public has awareness of the importance of masks to prevent transmission of COVID-19. Moreover, the research also found that wearing masks throughout the community can contribute to the control of COVID-19 by reducing the emission of infected saliva [20]. Meanwhile, increasing the awareness of the population about handwashing will provide the greatest benefit for reducing the pandemic [21]. The research informant said:

“Public awareness grows because we often urge it to prevent COVID-19. The message that we often convey is that the public will be more disciplined and orderly in the rules of the new normal era by still paying attention to health protocols, such as washing hands frequently and using masks.”



**Figure 1.** The Village Guard Post at the village gate



**Figure 2.** Educational messages for washing hands with soap

Covid-19 education at the village level, such as that carried out by the *Jaga Kampung* team, is relatively effective in preventing the spread of the virus. At the time this article was written, the village that was the research location had not experienced a positive case of COVID-19. The COVID-19 cluster, which continues to increase in Riau Province from June to August 2020, generally clusters of transmission in offices, companies, and urban areas. Dealing with this phenomenon, an inclusive and community-based approach to public health resilience and preparedness is urgently needed [25].

### 3.2. The Model of Risk Communication for the Prevention of COVID-19

Risk communication is one way to protect and reduce risks faced by society [12]. With risk communication, there will be an exchange of assessments, estimates, and opinions about hazards and risks among the various stakeholders involved [13]. Professionals and risk researchers consider public participation in risk assessment and management important [14]. People-centered risk communication is more effective than top-down government communication approaches. Risk communication must utilize the social networks that already exist in society because it has a significant effect on taking protective action [22].

Risk communication in *Jaga Kampung* is carried out through a persuasive approach. Persuasive communication puts forward a strategy of inviting, not coercing. Persuasive communication is in accordance with the characteristics of the people of Riau, who generally have a Malay culture, namely avoiding conflict, being soft, tolerant, and peaceful. The *Jaga Kampung* team delivers messages on the risk of COVID-19 to the community passing the *Jaga Kampung* post.

In addition, the team on duty also visit the houses and stalls to convey health protocols to residents. If there are residents from outside the village who come to the village, they are required to report to the *Jaga Kampung* post to undergo temperature checks and health checks. The society has also not

been allowed to hold activities that invite crowds, such as weddings, because they have the potential to trigger transmission. This research informant said:

“When conducting socialization and educating the public to always pay attention to health protocols, we use a humanist communication approach, including when warning residents not to get together.”

This humanist and persuasive approach make communication to be more effective because there is no resistance from residents. The society receives the Jaga Kampung team well and participates in the success of preventing COVID-19. In fact, many residents and shop owners have the awareness to build an independent handwashing place in front of their house or place of business. When in early August 2020, Riau Province experienced a spike in COVID-19 cases, *Jaga Kampung* officers intensified their communication activities and sprayed disinfectants.

Reducing the risk of COVID-19 through *Jaga Kampung* also targets food security. The activities include planting food crops on village-owned land and unused society lands. The goal is to create food security at the community level and revive the society's economy. Planting activities are carried out in mutual cooperation with society. Mutual Assistance is a distinctive culture of the Indonesian people and is an important social asset to overcome COVID-19 [23]. The crops are then distributed to people who need them to reduce the cost of spending on food.

The issue of economic risk needs to be considered because the economic recovery is expected to be long-lasting [24]. Facing this condition, Indonesia needs to strengthen economic resilience [25]. Moreover, COVID-19 pandemic is likely to affect global food supplies [26]. It is hoped that this model of maintaining food supply at the village level will strengthen the food security of society. If the majority of villages in Indonesia, even globally, are able to do this, it can reduce the burden on countries that are threatened with the economic recession.

The construction of a risk communication model for COVID-19 prevention through *Jaga Kampung* can be seen as a collaborative model involving the police (*Bhabinkamtibmas*), soldiers (*Babinsa*), village leaders, village health workers, community leaders, and volunteers. The message conveyed was in the form of health risks and socio-economic risks due to COVID-19. The communication channel, the *Jaga Kampung* post as the main arena, is implemented through interpersonal communication and social media. The message delivery strategy is persuasive and humanist. The target audience is the villagers and outsiders who come. Communication feedback is in the form of community participation who are volunteering to be involved in preventing COVID-19. The expected effect is a reduction in the risk of COVID-19 and socio-economic immunity.

This village-level communication model is similar to that of rural communities in China, in which both of them involve volunteers and the police, through face-to-face communication, persuasion, with the aim of prevention. Communication channels are also interpersonal and multimedia. This type of communication has strong direction, interaction frequency, and high feedback. This model is considered to be the most effective for COVID-19 communication [6]. The difference is, *Jaga Kampung's* communication does not involve party members and it does not use coercive strategies.

#### 4. Conclusion

The “Keep the Village” program model is one of the best practices in society-based risk communication for COVID-19 disaster prevention. This is in accordance with the program's mission, to create the resilience of society against COVID-19 which will have implications for resilience at the national level. The success of risk communication at the village level is determined by a humanist and persuasive communication strategy, through education, not through implementation. This approach model can create public awareness to comply with health protocols, as well as participate in COVID-19 prevention activities. The idea of society-based COVID-19 disaster risk reduction is interesting to disseminate because the context of its activities is not only on health issues but it also concerns the security and socio-economic issues. In the future, security and socio-economic issues are important to pay attention to because the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are not only on public health but also on the security and economic resilience of a country.

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