Evaluation of Public Policy and Crisis Leadership of Regional Heads at the Beginning of the Spread of COVID-19 in Indonesia in Kompas.com News

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Abstract. During the early stages of the spread of COVID-19 in Indonesia, regional leaders attempted to implement appropriate policies in order to mitigate the negative effects that occurred in their respective regions. This crisis period necessitates good managerial skills and a strong leadership personality from regional leaders. Policies are developed on the basis of public ethics and are geared toward providing high-quality public services. This study used a qualitative approach that employs Robert N. Entman's framing analysis method to examine the news text of Kompas.com in relation to the policies implemented by several regional leaders in Indonesia to control the spread of COVID-19. The results of the study show that several regional heads in Indonesia have the competence and character of crisis leadership and apply public ethics in taking and implementing policies to overcome the spread of COVID-19 in their respective regions.

1. Introduction

For about eleven months, Indonesia has been in the grip of the COVID-19 pandemic. From March 2020 to January 23, 2021, there were 977,974 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Indonesia (Covid19.go.id, 2021). In fact, according to Worldometers, Indonesia is among the top ten Asian countries with the highest number of corona cases (Kompas.com, 2020b). The high number of COVID-19 cases in Indonesia is influenced by several factors, including first, the high mobility of people, particularly during the holidays, second, increased capacity for daily tests, and third, the emergence of new clusters (Inews.id, 2020; Kompas.com, 2020d).

Several regions are included in the category of the highest number of cases and are even classified as black zones on the map of the distribution of COVID-19 cases in 2020. Kompas media published a list of Indonesian regions with the highest distribution rates in September 2020, including DKI Jakarta with 47,379 confirmed positive cases, East Java with 35,941, Central Java with 15,615, West Java with 12,709, and South Sulawesi with 12,695 (Kompas.com, 2020a).

When these three factors are considered together, the spread of COVID-19 in Indonesia is influenced by more than just these three. Another factor to consider is the government's actions or efforts. The government plays an important role in crisis situations, serving as the primary source of information and ensuring domestic stability. Every expression, statement, and comment made by the government has the potential to influence public opinion and action, particularly if it is stated in policy. Government statements and policies must be consistent. In a crisis like today's, every policy and government statement from the national to the regional levels must not only be consistent, but also be in sync with one another.

Since it was declared a national disaster on April 14, 2020 by Presidential Decree No. 12 of 2020, the Indonesian government has devised a variety of policies and regulations to combat the spread of COVID-19. The government policies are as follows: (a) Perppu Nomor 1/2020 Kebijakan Keuangan Negara untuk Penanganan Covid-19, (b) Perpres Nomor 54/2020 Perubahan Postur dan Rincian APBN 2020, dan (c) Komite Penanganan Covid-19 dan Pemulihan Ekonomi Nasional (PEN) (Kompas.com, 2020c). In addition to these policies, the government imposes a variety of rules, ranging from large-scale social restrictions (PSBB) that go into effect in March 2020 and are governed by Government Regulation Number 21 of 2020, to a mini lockdown or regional quarantine that goes into effect in September 2020. Following that, various terms have emerged with the goal of preventing the spread of COVID-19 to various regions in Indonesia. However, according to Relawan Kesehatan (Rekan), the central government's policies have not been synchronized with local governments (Jawapos.com, 2020). Victor Laiskodat, the Governor of East Nusa Tenggara, was one of the regional leaders who refused to impose a regional quarantine (Antaranews.com, 2020). In contrast to Laiskodat, several regional heads in Indonesia are thought to be capable of handling the crisis based on Charta Politica research results from July 6 to 12 2020, including the Governor of West Java.

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Ridwan Kamil, the Governor of Central Java, Ganjar Pranowo, the Governor of DKI Jakarta, Anies Baswedan, and the Governor of East Java, Khofifah Indar Parawansa (Kompas.com, 2020c).

The ability of regional heads to overcome crises serves as a barometer for the community in evaluating the quality of leadership possessed by each regional head. The media, as well as online media, play an important role in shaping public opinion against certain figures, including regional leaders. Kompas.com media is one of the credible and competent media outlets that can shape public opinion. Kompas.com or Kompas online is one of PT Kompas Media Nusantara's innovations, following the success of Kompas daily. Kompas online was later released from the daily Kompas, marked by the formation of PT Kompas Cyber Media on August 6, 1998, along with the proliferation of advertisers on online sites (Haq & Fadilah, 2019).

Kompas.com has a high level of credibility in Indonesia as an online media outlet. According to Alexa.com, Kompas.com is the fifth most popular website in Indonesia (www.alexa.com, 2021). Kompas.com and Kompas Daily are regarded as objective media when it comes to reporting an event. According to Westerstahl in McQuail (2000) in Rachmadani (2020), objectivity is related to two main things: factuality and impartiality. The accuracy of news information is related to its veracity. Factuality is a method of reporting events that is based on facts and free of journalistic opinions, and the truth can be verified by credible sources. Impartiality refers to whether a report presents events from two perspectives or only one.

Kompas.com certainly plays a significant role in influencing and shaping public opinion when it comes to reporting events surrounding COVID-19. Based on this, the researcher wishes to investigate how Kompas.com frames regional leaders in Indonesia who have crisis leadership in combating the spread of COVID-19 in their respective regions.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Social Construction of Reality

Peter L. Berger is an interpretive sociologist who popularized the term "constructionism." The social construction of reality is one of Peter L. Berger's collaborations with Thomas Luckmann (Eriyanto, 2002). Berger and Luckmann (1966) state in relation to social reality that the world of everyday life is not only taken for granted as reality by the ordinary members of society in the subjectively meaningful conduct of their lives. It is a world that originates in their thoughts and actions and is maintained as real by these. Furthermore, they explain that social order is a human product. Social order does not exist naturally, but it is a result of human activity. Humans construct their own identities in order to be accepted in their social environments.

The formation of a person's identity occurs in three stages: externalization, objectification, and internalization. According to Sulaiman (2016), society as an objective reality entails institutionalization. The process of institutionalization begins with externalization, which is repeated until a pattern is discovered and understood collectively, and then becomes habituation (habitualization). Habitualization becomes a tradition, which is then passed down from generation to generation via language.

Furthermore, society as an objective reality entails the involvement of legitimacy. Legitimacy is the objectification of the second level of meaning, and it is knowledge with cognitive and normative dimensions because it includes explanations as well as values. Legitimacy serves to make institutionalized objectivation subjectively acceptable to someone.

Then, society as a subjective reality implies that the individual interprets objective reality subjectively. This is referred to as internalization. Internalization (Sulaiman, 2016), is a process by which humans 'take over' the world in which they live. This process, which includes both primary and secondary socialization, lasts a lifetime. Internalization is the process of accepting other people's perceptions of the institutional world.

According to Eriyanto (2002), every journalist (media) has a different perspective on an event. News is not a true event or fact, but rather the result of interaction between journalists and facts. Journalists immerse themselves in interpreting reality during the internalization process. The constructionist approach assesses the media, journalists, and news in several ways, including (1) facts or events are the result of construction; (2) the media is a construction agent; (3) news is not a reflection of reality, but a construction of reality; (4) news is subjective; (5) journalists are not reporters, but agents of reality construction; and (6) ethics, moral choice, and partisanship of journalists are an integral part of news production; (7) the values, ethics and moral choices of researchers become an integral part of research; and (8) the public has their own interpretation of the news.

2.2 Public Ethics and Good Governance

Ethics is the study of moral values, such as what is good and bad, right and wrong (Velasquez, 2017). Ethics and morals are frequently confused as the same concept, but they are not. Morals are specific obligations that govern how we act. Moral is a normative and imperative discourse that is implemented within the framework of good/bad, right/wrong, and is regarded as an absolute or transcendent value. While ethics is commonly understood as a philosophical reflection on morals, it also means that ethics is more of a normative discourse (not always an obligatory command) that discusses good and evil (Haryatmoko, 2015).

In the context of public service, ethics is associated with policymakers' moral responsibility for the welfare of society. Public ethics is defined as the reflection of standards/norms that determine good/bad, right/wrong behavior, actions, and decisions in the context of carrying out public service responsibilities. In contrast to political ethics, the main concern of public ethics is quality and relevant public services; second, not only the code of ethics or norms, but especially its reflective
dimension, which means that the function of public ethics is as an aid in weighing choices of public policy tools and evaluation tools that take into account their ethical consequences, as well as political, social, cultural, and economic efforts at Public ethics governs, in particular, political society and all those involved in state institutions (Haryatmoko, 2015).

The ultimate goal of public ethics is to provide high-quality, relevant public services. As a reflection of good governance, this quality and relevant public service is the responsibility of the apparatus as a public administrator. A system of good governance is one in which governance is based on the pattern of relations between governments. Lembaga Administrasi Negara (LAN) defines good governance as the process of implementing the provision of public goods and services while exercising state power.

Furthermore, LAN asserts that good in the context of good governance has two meanings. First, values that uphold people's wishes/will and values that can increase people's ability to achieve the (national) goals of self-reliance, sustainable development, and social justice. Second, the operational aspects of a government that is effective and efficient in carrying out its duties in order to achieve these goals. The implementation of a solid and responsible state government that is efficient and effective by maintaining a synergistic constructive interaction between the domains of the state, private sector, and society is a form of good governance (Arisaputra, 2013).

2.3 Mass Media

According to Blake and Haroldsen in Susanto (2017), "in modern society, the mass media is an institution for socializing messages that are important in society, both formal and informal." As a result, the media must organize messages that are useful to the audience and easy to understand. According to Elvinaro in Habibie (2018), the function of mass media can be classified into five categories: a) supervision, b) interpretation, c) linkage, d) value transmission, and e) entertainment (entertainment).

According to McQuail in Santos (2017), there are six perspectives on how the media plays a role in social life, particularly in modern society. First, consider the media as a window into events and experiences. The media is viewed as a window through which the audience can see what is going on outside, or as a means of learning about various events. Second, the media is frequently regarded as a mirror of societal and global events, implying a faithful reflection. Reflect various events in society and the world that reflect what is. Third, the media acts as a filter or gatekeeper, deciding what gets attention and what doesn't.

Fourth, the media are frequently viewed as guides, interpreters, or translators who translate and show socializing messages that are important in society, both formal and informal. The media are frequently regarded as a mirror of societal and global events, implying a faithful reflection. Reflect various events in society and the world that reflect what is. Third, the media acts as a filter or gatekeeper, deciding what gets attention and what doesn't.

Fifth, consider the media to be a forum for presenting various information and ideas to the public, allowing for responses and feedback. Sixth, the media as an interlocutor that is not only a conduit for information but also a communication partner that allows for interactive communication.

In the democratic context, media acts as a counterweight in the public sphere. The media has five functions, including first, they have to inform citizens about what is happening around them (it is called by the 'surveillance' or 'monitoring' functions of the media); second, they must educate as to what is the meaning and significance of the 'facts' (it is about how journalists protect their objectivity); third, the media must provide a platform for public political discourse, facilitating the formation of 'public opinion', and feeding that opinion back to the public from whence it came. This must include the provision of space for the expression of dissent, without which the notion of democratic consensus would be meaningless; fourth, the media should give publicity to governmental and political institutions (the 'watchdog' role of journalism), and fifth, the media in democratic societies serve as a channel for the advocacy of political viewpoints (McNair, 2011).

2.4 Crisis Leadership

During a pandemic, the role of a leader is critical, in addition to public compliance with existing Health protocols. Leaders in the context of regional heads are expected to be competent in terms of leadership (leadership). Intelligence (both verbally, thinking/perception, and reasoning), self-confidence (having confidence in making a change), determination (a strong desire to complete a job), and integrity are general characteristics of leadership (upholding honesty and integrity), trustworthiness, and sociability (friendliness and sociability) (Miller, 2015).

Experts define several skills that a leader must have (Dirani et al., 2020), including the ability to (a) model the way: clarify and provide examples through having faith, affirming and personifying shared values, and studying the actions taken, (b) inspire a shared vision: have a picture of the future, have a common goal, and be able to fight for common goals, and (c) challenge the process: be able to read opportunities and dare to take risks; take the initiative, have a broad view, and learn.

In crisis situations, a leader's competence and skills are also required. According to Sapriel in Wino et al. (2020), a crisis is an event, condition, accusation, or set of circumstances that jeopardizes an individual's or organization's integrity, reputation, or survival. Crisis can jeopardize a sense of security or societal values (Wino et al., 2020). According to Bartos (2007) in Al Eid and Arnout (2020), the crisis has several characteristics, including surprise, a lack of information, an escalation of events, a loss of control, panic, and the absence of a rapid, fundamental solution.

In terms of the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) ICS (Incident Command System), crisis management activities are also referred to as managing on the edge of darkness because many parameters and information are unknown, adding to the uncertainty. As a result, it requires a leader (crisis leader) who is pragmatic, quick to react to changes (responsive), firm in implementing compliance,
including for schedules, through performance management schemes (rewards and consequences), and has good articulation in conveying communication in order to increase trust from both internal and external stakeholders (Wino et al., 2020).

3. Methods

This is a qualitative study designed to provide researchers with a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. In the social sciences, qualitative research is used to investigate, describe, or explain social phenomena; dismantle the food behind actions, situations, and events, and develop a deep understanding of aspects of social life; construct a complete description of a person from a natural setting; explore new, unexplored areas; or link something macro-macro: the relationship between individuals, and in institutional and cultural contexts (Leavy, 2014).

During the data collection process, literature and document studies, as well as analyzing mass media texts and other sources related to the phenomenon under study, are used. The unit of analysis, the researcher chose three texts published on Kompas.com between March and August 2020. This time period was chosen because the spread and number of COVID-19 cases in Indonesia continue to rise, and the government—as well as local governments—is the party that the media focuses on in terms of the strategy for dealing with these cases.

The first news text is titled “7 Langkah Cepat Kepala Daerah Tangkal Corona, Lacak Peserta Seminar, Tutup Posyandu dan Tes Gratis” and is due out on March 16th, 2020. The second news text is titled “Survei Charta Politika: Ridwan Kamil Kepala Daerah Terbaik Dalam Tangani Covid-19” and it will be published on July 23, 2020. Finally, on July 18, 2020, news text 3 is titled “Melihat Penanganan Covid-19 di 5 Provinsi yang Disebut Terbaik oleh Presiden Jokowi.” The researcher intends to highlight the framing of public policies as well as the characteristics of crisis leadership possessed by heads of state in dealing with the spread of COVID-19 in their respective regions through these three texts.

Furthermore, during the data analysis stage, Robert N. Entman framing analysis was used. News frames are formed through a process of negotiating meaning between journalists (media) and other social actors (Droog et al., 2020). The media shape events and organizations based on what and how they report on them. The media uses framing that is known to the public so that it is easy to convey information. Media framing is very important because the audience does not have direct experience with the events or organizations that are told and they depend on the media to keep abreast of developments in information and use it as a reference in making rational decisions (Speckman, 2021).

In simple words, framing analysis is defined as the analysis on how reality (events, actors, groups, or whatever) is framed by the media. Framing relates to the news production process—the framework and routines of media organizations. How events are framed, why events are understood in a certain framework or a certain frame, not in other frames, is not solely caused by the structure of journalists, but also the work routines and media institutions that directly or indirectly affect the meaning of events (Eriyanto, 2002).

According to Entman in Eriyanto (2002), framing has two major dimensions: issue selection and emphasizing or highlighting specific aspects of reality/issues. The choice of issues is related to the choice of facts. Journalists choose which aspects of an issue to highlight. The highlighting aspect is associated with the writing of facts. This refers to the selection of specific words, sentences, images, and images that will be displayed to the general public. The protrusion of a reality can more easily attract the audience’s attention. The media frames issues by emphasizing certain issues while ignoring others. Framing is a strategy used by journalists to determine their point of view when selecting issues and making news. This determines which facts are used, which parts are highlighted and omitted, and how the news is presented.

Entman’s framing analysis is divided into four components, which are as follows: (a) Defines problems is the primary component of framing that emphasizes how events are understood and interpreted by journalists or journalists; (b) Diagnosing causes is a framing element that is used to frame an event’s subject or causal actor. An event’s cause can be who or what; (c) Ethical judgment. This component suggests the legitimacy or delegitimacy of issues; and (d) Treatment recommendations. This component is used to determine what journalists or journalists desire. The solution is heavily influenced by how the event is perceived and who is blamed for the problem (Sukendar & Budi, 2020).

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Text Analysis

News 1: “7 Langkah Cepat Kepala Daerah Tangkal Corona, Lacak Peserta Seminar, Tutup Posyandu dan Tes Gratis”

| Define problems | Efforts or steps taken by a number of regional leaders in Indonesia to anticipate the spread of the corona virus (covid-19). |

| Diagnose causes | Regional heads in Indonesia who have various efforts to prevent the spread of the corona virus, including (a) the Governor of West Java, Ridwan Kamil, conducting a search on seminar participants in Bogor and the tabligh akbar activity in Petaling Jaya, Malaysia, which was allegedly attended by West Java participants. (b) The Mayor of Tasikmalaya, Budi Budiman, issued a circular announcing the decision to suspend all posyandu activities in all Tasikmalaya villages; (c) The Mayor of Surabaya, Tri Rismaharini, provided free services or examinations for residents who were indicated to be exposed to the corona virus; (d) The Governor of Central Java, Ganjar Pranowo, provided seven hospitals that became referrals for the Central |
Java Province for free corona tests, (e) the Governor of the Special Region of Yogyakarta, Sri Sultan Hamengku Buwono X, invited his citizens to be disciplined in implementing a healthy lifestyle, (f) the Mayor of Jayapura, Benhur Tommy Mano, eliminated attendance using finger print for ASN (civil apparatus state), and (g) the Governor of North Sumatra, Edy Rahmayadi, invited the public to use the standard Indonesia quick response code (QRIS) facility issued by Bank Indonesia to anticipate the spread of the corona virus via cash.

Moral judgement. Regional leaders' efforts or actions are capable of preventing the spread of the corona virus, both regionally and nationally.

Treatment recommendation. Other regional heads in Indonesia can emulate the efforts or steps taken by these seven regional heads.


Define problems. According to a survey conducted by Charta Politika, Ridwan Kamil is rated as the Governor and Tri Rismaharini as the Mayor who has performed the best in dealing with the spread of COVID-19.

Diagnose causes. On July 6-12, 2020, Charta Politika conducted a survey on the performance of regional heads in Indonesia in handling the spread of COVID-19 against 2000 respondents with criteria of 17 years or having met the requirements of voters with a margin of error of 2.19 percent and quality control of 20% of the total sample. According to the results of a telephone survey, the Governor of West Java, Ridwan Kamil, received 15.6 percent of the votes, followed by the Governor of Central Java, Ganjar Pranowo, who received 13.4 percent, and the Governor of DKI Jakarta, Anis Baswedan, who received 11.8 percent and the fourth position was occupied by the Governor of East Java, Khofifah Indar Parawansa, with a 5.1 percent gain. Meanwhile, at the Regent – Mayor level, the Mayor of Surabaya, Tri Rismaharini, took first place with a gain of 2.2 percent, followed by the Mayor of Bogor, Bima Arya, with a gain of 1.3 percent, and the Regent of Banyuwangi, Abdullah Azwar Anas, with a gain of 1.1 percent.

Moral judgement. The Charta Politika survey reflects the performance of regional leaders in Indonesia in dealing with the spread of COVID-19.

Treatment recommendation. Regional leaders are expected to be more effective in combating the spread of COVID-19 in their respective regions.


Define problems. There are 5 provinces that received a very good assessment from President Joko Widodo in handling COVID-19, namely DI Yogyakarta, Bangka Belitung, Aceh, West Sumatra and Gorontalo.

Diagnose causes. The five governors used their own strategies to combat the spread of COVID-19 in their respective regions. In Yogyakarta, the government established a policy direction for the Regional Revenue and Expenditure Budget (APBD) that focuses on dealing with the impact of COVID-19 in various sectors such as health, community social security, and assistance for MSMEs and small business actors, as well as seven steps to help accelerate dealing with COVID-19. Meanwhile, Erzaldi, the Governor of the Bangka Belitung Islands, reinforced cooperation and coordination among the task force team, local officials, local government, and the community. Plt. Aceh Nova Iriansyah, the Governor of Aceh Province, has established a PSBB policy and prepared supporting facilities such as information posts, referral hospitals, and isolation rooms. Another effort made by West Sumatra Governor Irwan Prayitno is to track residents who have been confirmed to be positive for Covid-19 and to collaborate with the Diagnostic and Integrated Research Laboratory for Infectious Diseases, Faculty of Medicine, Andalas University. Finally, the Gorontalo Provincial Government is addressing COVID-19 through cross-sectoral coordination and cooperation, including the Health Service, BPBD, Social Service, TNI, Police, PMI, and the Port Health Office at the entrance, as well as adequate infrastructure needed.

Moral judgement. The five governors' efforts were successful in halting the spread of COVID-19 in their respective regions.

Treatment recommendation. The handling of COVID-19 in these five provinces serves as a model for other Indonesian regional governments.

4.2 Public Policy: Representation of Public Ethics and Crisis Leadership Characters

Governments (including local governments) have a duty to meet the needs of their citizens. The process of making and enforcing decisions, known as governance, is based on the dimensions of public ethics. Public ethics has three dimensions: objective, modalities, and actions (Haryatmoko, 2015). The objective dimension is defined as an effort to achieve community welfare, which entails the provision of high-quality, relevant public services. The main concern is the implementation of a transparent public policy in public management.

The next dimension is the modality (means, polity) that allows goals to be achieved. This dimension includes systems and fundamental principles for organizing public service practices with a focus on creating more equitable social institutions. This dimension contains two normative patterns: first, the political order (laws and institutions) must adhere to the principles of solidarity and subsidiarity, as well as the acceptance of plurality; social structures are organized in accordance with the principles of justice and equality before the law; and, second, political forces are organized in accordance with the principle of reciprocity.

The third dimension is the behavior of politicians and public officials who are expected to be honest. This third dimension of public ethics is important in determining political rationality, which consists of action rationality and virtue (moral quality of actors). If the actor has a situation orientation and understands the
problem, political action is said to be rational. This assumes the presence of technical expertise, leadership, and ethics.

Policies enacted by the government at any level that are related to the public interest are designed to achieve specific objectives. In an instrumental sense, public policy is a tool for achieving goals related to government efforts in realizing public values, such as (a) the idealized values of society, such as justice, equality, and openness, (b) resolving problems faced by society, such as poverty, unemployment, crime, and poor public services, and (c) taking advantage of new opportunities for a better life for the community, such as encouraging investment, service innovation, and increasing exports (Handoyo, 2012).

The policies or actions taken by several regional leaders in Indonesia, as described in Kompas.com news, embody three dimensions of public ethics. In terms of the objective dimension, what some regional leaders have done is aimed at achieving community welfare. The community's crisis situation necessitates regional leaders' ability to formulate clear general policies in terms of priorities, programs, methods, and objectives of public funds. The policy's focus and direction are entirely focused on mitigating the negative impact and suppressing the spread of COVID-19 in their respective regions. Although there are various regional heads with other regional heads, the policies taken refer to policies taken by the central government that both suppress the spread of COVID-19.

The next dimension is the modality dimension which is related to the basic principles of organizing public service practices. In this dimension there is a moral dimension, namely (a) the role of public ethics in testing and critiquing the legitimacy of political decisions, institutions and practices, (b) attitudes in dealing with structures, namely agreeing or rejecting the social, economic and political order of living together, and (c) the principle of subsidiarity in public services, meaning that if the community itself, associations, NGOs or non-profit organizations are able to organize or solve problems with their capabilities and facilities, the state does not need to intervene (Haryatmoko, 2015). Kompas.com's reporting describes how local governments implement various policies or programs by involving other institutions outside the government, including the community. That the policies taken get legitimacy from various institutions and elements of society. This is implicitly reflected in the positive tone of Kompas.com's coverage of the policies taken by regional heads.

The last dimension is the dimension of action, which is related to action rationality and virtue (the moral quality of the actor). As a public official who values public integrity, the regional head is the intended perpetrator. This dimension is concerned with a public official's technical competence, leadership ability, and ethics. A regional head must be able to have technical competence as well as good leadership skills in order to master conflict management in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis situation in their area. The estuary represents how regional leaders or public officials respond to this crisis situation via policy or decision making. In addition to technical competence and leadership abilities, ethics is critical because it describes a public official's partiality toward people who have suffered losses (physical and material) as a result of COVID-19. Kompas.com clearly describes the various policies implemented by several regional leaders in Indonesia in order to overcome the COVID-19 crisis. In line with this dimension, Kompas.com depicts the crisis leadership personality of several regional leaders who are framed in the news.

Characters in crisis leadership are pragmatic, responsive, assertive, and communicative. The **pragmatic** character is reflected in several efforts or strategies, including the Governor of Central Java, Ganjar Pranowo, providing a referral hospital, and the Mayor of Surabaya, Tri Rismaharini, implementing fee services or examinations for residents who are suspected of being exposed to the corona virus. The Acting Governor of Aceh, Nova Iriansyah, also took this step, establishing the PSBB policy and preparing supporting facilities such as information posts, referral hospitals, and isolation rooms. Furthermore, the pragmatic nature of the steps taken by the Government of the Special Region of Yogyakarta in determining the direction of the regional revenue and expenditure budget (APBD) policy focusing on dealing with the impact of COVID-19.

Furthermore, several regional leaders, including the Governor of the Bangka Belitung Islands, Erzaldi, demonstrated **responsiveness** by strengthening cooperation and coordination between government agencies and community members. The Gorontalo Provincial Government has also used cross-sectoral coordination and cooperation to deal with COVID-19. Furthermore, this responsiveness was demonstrated by the Governor of West Sumatra, Irwan Prayitno, who tracked residents who were confirmed positive for COVID-19 in collaboration with the Infectious Diseases Integrated Research Team, Faculty of Medicine, Andalas University.

The character after that is **assertive** and **communicative**. This character was demonstrated by Tasikmalaya Mayor Budi Budiman, who issued a circular decree closing all integrated service post activities in all Tasikmalaya villages. The policy of the Governor of the Special Region of Yogyakarta, Sri Sultan Hamengku Buwono X, who invites his citizens to be disciplined in implementing a healthy lifestyle, and the Governor of North Sumatra, Edy Rahmayadi, who urges the public to use the standard Indonesian quick response code (QRIS) facility issued by Bank Indonesia to anticipate the transmission of the corona virus through cash, also reflect this character.

## 5. Conclusion

In times of crisis, a public official must be able to lead while adhering to public ethics. The COVID-19 pandemic is not only a disaster for all Indonesians and the rest of the world, but it also serves as a leadership test for regional leaders. A strong leadership personality
enables a regional leader to provide good public services even in difficult situations. The goal of the policy or decision is to benefit the community as a whole. The handling of the initial phase of COVID-19 spread, as reported by Kompas.com, is an assessment of how the character of leadership and public ethics can be applied by several regional heads in Indonesia.

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