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# Governor of East Kalimantan Political Leadership Opinion in Responding to Covid-19 Policies

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***ABSTRACT***

*This study aims to develop an understanding of opinion leadership in improving communication about digital media to encourage deeper engagement and share information on various digital platforms in identifying opinion leadership. Novelty in this study is the response to the opinion leaders of the East Kalimantan Governor's political discourse in the Covid-19 response policy. This research uses qualitative research. Data was collected using primary data in the form of in-depth interviews with the people of East Kalimantan and supported by secondary data in the form of fifteen online media and the official website of the East Kalimantan government. Data analysis using Nvivo 12 Plus software to get more professional results. The results of this study are that the Covid-19 management policy received positive and negative responses from the people of East Kalimantan, each showing a figure of 21.43 per cent and 78.57 per cent. This study concludes that there is no harmony between the opinions of political leadership in the media and the implementation of existing policies in the community. The opinion of the leadership of the Governor of East Kalimantan can play a central role in disseminating broad and fascinating ideas based on ideas classified into five different types, each based on knowledge, education, expertise, innovation, media presence.*

***Keywords****: Covid-19, east Kalimantan, policy, opinion leadership, response*

**ABSTRAK**

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengembangkan pemahaman tentang kepemimpinan opini dalam meningkatkan komunikasi tentang media digital sehingga mendorong keterlibatan yang lebih dalam, untuk berbagi informasi di berbagai platform digital dalam identifikasi kepemimpinan opini. Novelty dalam penelitian ini yaitu respon kepemimpinan opini wacana politik Gubernur Kalimantan Timur dalam kebijakan penanggulangan Covid-19. Penelitian ini menggunakan penelitian kualitatif. Pengumpulan data dilakukan dengan menggunakan data primer berupa wawancara-mendalam (in-depth interview) dengan masyarakat Kalimantan Timur. Didukung oleh data sekunder berupa lima belas media online dan web resmi pemerintah Kalimantan Timur. Analisis data menggunakan software Nvivo 12 Plus, agar mendapatkan hasil yang lebih profesional. Hasil penelitian ini yaitu dalam kebijakan pengelolaan Covid-19 mendapatkan respon positif dan negatif dari masyarakat Kalimantan Timur, masing-masing menunjukkan angka sebesar 21,43 persen, dan 78,57 persen. Kesimpulan dari penelitian ini yaitu belum ada keselarasan antara opini kepemimpinan politik dalam media dengan implementasi kebijakan yang ada di tengah masyarakat. Opini kepemimpinan Gubernur Kalimantan Timur dapat berperan sentral dalam penyebaran ide yang luas, dan sangat menarik berdasarkan gagasan yang telah diklasifikasikan dalam lima jenis yang berbeda, masing-masing berdasarkan pengetahuan, edukasi, keahlian, inovasi, kehadiran dalam media.

**Kata Kunci**: Covid-19, Kalimantan Timur, kebijakan, opini kepemimpinan, respon

## INTRODUCTION

Personal media behaviour influences and restricts debate by providing information for expressing political opinions. In the past, media perception leadership has developed scientifically and has increased science management, with leadership not dependent on talent but organized training preparations. Leaders and leadership are closely related to management efforts and even become the organization's core, management, and administration. Everyone who carries out the management function should carry out leadership well.

Opinion leadership is a central concept in various fields such as marketing, political research, and communication resulting in the increasing popularity in media, which has sparked discussions through social networking sites. So that opinion leadership builds to measure the nature of opinion leadership continuously by applying several criteria to become a sample that distinguishes opinion leaders from non-leaders (Gnambs, 2019). The view of opinion leadership considers the concept as the continuing nature of differences between individuals in social influence, then identifies the subgroups that distinguish opinion leaders and non-leaders.

The mass media reach first to opinion leaders, i.e., active media users who collect, interpret, and disseminate the media messages to less active media consumers (Stehr et al., 2015). Opinion leadership is generally associated with higher socioeconomic status and higher leadership education, knowledge, and social recognition. Opinion leaders become more politically savvy and want to be involved in community activities. The role of opinion leaders requires participation which is also a way to help maintain their status. Then, the relationship between leadership and public relations can be related to several factors, such as opinion leaders who have better skills and tasks related to group participation (Skoric & Zhang, 2019).

Meanwhile, this research focuses on the opinion leaders of the East Kalimantan Governor's political discourse in the Covid-19 response policy, which begins with several indicators as new things. As is known, the East Kalimantan Provincial Government is not ready to respond to the Covid-19 outbreak. The terminology used by the East Kalimantan Provincial Government often astonishes the public (Liputan6.com, 2020). The city of Balikpapan remains the most significant contributor of daily Covid-19 cases in East Kalimantan, with 391 confirmed positive cases. A spokesman for the East Kalimantan Covid-19 Task Force, Andy Mohamed Ishak, said there were still 1,716 positive confirmed cases in East Kalimantan. New cases confirmed in Berau 149, West Kutai 243, Kutai Kartanegara 287, East Kutai 169, Mahakam Ulu 81, Paser 131, and Penajam Paser Utara 67 cases, Bontang

90 cases, Samarinda 108 cases (Republika.co.id, 2021). This research looks at and puts forward a sense of responsibility as a leader in the wider community. Apart from communications based on political discourse, political authorities in Indonesia often utilize this communication.

This research also departs from several controversial opinions issued by the Governor of East Kalimantan, Isran Noor, which is not the first time. The former regent of East Kutai often throws similar statements to the media crew when asked about specific issues by journalists. However, the public's most attention was his statement regarding the 30th death toll in the mining pit that fell in Kutai Kartanegara on October 24, 2018. Some controversial statements made by the Governor of East Kalimantan (Isran Noor) such as "Not a problem. Fate was when he drowned in a mining pool. Careful. Everywhere, casualties occurred". Another statement, "I'm also surprised. Maybe there are ghosts. How come there are so many victims of children" (Selasar.co, 2021).

The mass media quickly disseminate information directly to the entire community without being limited by distance. Still, not all direct messages are conveyed just like that, and these messages must be studied together first so that the news is related to the public without being limited by distance (Supriadi, 2017). The mass media users expect to receive information about relevant events and advice on practical matters from opinions about social and political orientations. In cognitive dissonance theory, individuals strive for mental balance. Cognitive dissonance will motivate them to disperse conflicting perceptions, and media users prefer messages consistent with attitudes and avoid contradictory content. In this way, mass media communicators can reduce uncertainty and thereby influence the opinions and decisions of media users (Stehr et al., 2015).

Some of the characteristics of opinion leaders are demography, socioeconomic status, media exposure, social position, and personality traits. Some of these characteristics allow them to influence others (Stehr et al., 2015). Opinion leaders display personal attributes to function in the interpersonal communication process, which includes self-confidence. In addition, opinion leaders also have a high level of expertise and knowledge to generate significant interest in enduring involvement in particular issues. Opinion leaders not only provide information but are actively seeking. Several studies have shown that opinion leaders use the media, especially news. Leaders argue more interested in particular issues. Moreover, opinion leaders see themselves as pioneers of social trends (Park, 2019).

Through mass media to obtain information and have a more assertive personality and more diverse social networks. To demonstrate that the communicative role in opinion leadership is more different than previously thought, opinion leaders differ in the scope of the problems they present, ranging from "cosmopolitan" to "local" (Schäfer & Taddicken, 2015). The influence of mass communication on the behaviour of opinion leaders takes information from the mass media, which will eventually spread directly. This process is called the "two-step flow model". Interaction can be both online and offline so that the role of opinion leaders will be more significant (Casaló et al., 2020). Opinion leaders differ in how proactive they are in providing ideas, with some for their advice from others. Opinion leaders and followers may seek or receive advice from others on a particular topic.

Current developments may change the nature of opinion leadership from an opinion leadership perspective. There will be a constant return from the previous separate modes of communication in interactive online media, especially from social media platforms (Kononova & Akbar, 2015). The increasing number of social media networks, the broader range of information and opinions, and the growing complexity of the linkages between available channels are likely to influence the way individuals find, select, and evaluate content. To have a positive influence that had a significant impact. However, opinion leadership slightly affects the intention to participate (Lamm, 2019). Opinion leadership is the acquired knowledge, opinions, and skills to influence the attitudes and actions of others (Zamora & Madariaga, 2017). An essential part of opinion formation in society in generating interest in protest to provide opinion leadership is social interaction and communication, directed media. It generates competent perception by the social environment (Calero Valdez et al., 2018). The importance of opinion leaders in shaping public preferences in informing fellow citizens and changing behaviour. Most share the same attributes as offline opinion leaders (Park & Kaye, 2017).

Media use among groups made it clear that opinion leaders communicate most frequently about issues relevant to opinion leaders by engaging in face-to-face communication and communication using information media. Opinion leaders have emerged as influential members of online communities and have proven to be a source of advice for consumers (Casalo et al., 2008). Opinion leadership is related to the extent to which individuals are considered models for others, the time to which the information provided is exciting and persuasive (Casaló et al., 2020). According to (Jungnickel, 2018), defining opinion leadership has three concepts: (1) Opinion leaders have a particular influence on the awareness of others about a problem and opinions and behaviour. (2) Opinion leaders are individuals who

influence others through mediated interpersonal relationships. (3) Opinion leaders are not professional communicators.

Opinion leaders in the media network seem essential because they actively participate in communications that can influence others from the opinion leader network. To look at perceived opinion and social media leadership, focusing solely on innovative individuals will fail to take full advantage of all potential points in the increased use of social media and analytical tools within social media networks (Akdevelioglu & Kara, 2020). Media networks can change communication politics, with traditional media and elite settings still decisive in shaping politics. Still, digital communication has given new actors and communities the ability to influence the shape of public discourse.

The concept of opinion leaders can better communicate currents on social media because, in this context, embedded as nodes in the network. Opinion leaders can be strategic positioned as transmitters that convey information and influence to the more passive and central network members (Friemel, 2015). Social networks with the concept of social networks as a relationship between a group of individuals as a communication structure that applies when there is a demand for needs in society and becomes a series of communication relationships (Hajar et al., 2019). Researchers investigated the dissemination of news and advertising messages at the community level, finding that individuals and groups in campaigns through specific mass media networks tend to share ideas sourced from others, thereby increasing self-confidence and the ability to propaganda in action (Yang et al., 2020). In the digital age, leadership identification processes are more complex and non-linear—sophisticated algorithms to extract personal information from user-generated content and categorize reviews as leaders or non-leader. Opinion leaders can respond to as individuals who influence the decision-making of others as well as attitudes and behaviour.

Planning for content selection on the network creates content and goals to achieve from the range to avoid boredom caused when content planning is not varied (Jacksen & Pandrianto, 2021). Opinion leaders act as intermediaries of new ideas, information, and opinions; however, they do not have to hold formal positions of power because they function as a communication network related to disseminating complex issues to society at the level of social media. After all, it serves as a gateway that breaks down complex specific contexts (Larsson, 2019). This research aims to develop an understanding of opinion leadership in improving communication about digital media to encourage deeper involvement at sharing information on various digital platforms in identifying opinion leadership.

**RESEARCH METHOD**

The type of research used in this research is qualitative. A case study is a type of research that provides a thorough investigation of one or more individual programs, events, processes, and activities. Time and training by collecting detailed information using different data collection processes and continuous-time (Creswell, 2009). The data collected in this study used a literature study or focused on the use of secondary data in the form of fifteen nationally reputable online news media, from January 1, 2021, to May 30, 2021, and primary. Through an in-depth interview process with five people from East Kalimantan. Some of the people interviewed had a background as the head of the Loa Janan youth collaboration, and some were village assistants. The research roadmap is below.
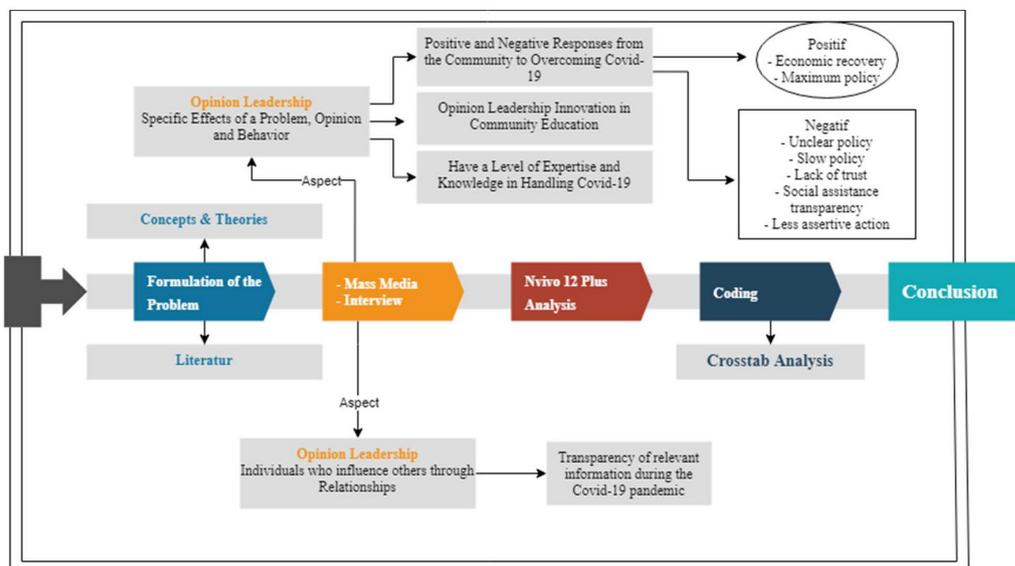


**Figure 1. Research Roadmap**
**Source: Processed by Author**

In addition, data from interviews and online news sources were used using similar coding and then cross-tabulation analysis using the Nvivo 12 Plus software. Nvivo 12 Plus is used for qualitative data analysis to get more professional results (AlYahmady & Al Abri, 2013).

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

In terms of innovation, the perception of opinion leadership, whereas social media opinion leadership by social media visibility, is affected by regional disparities (Akdevelioglu & Kara, 2020). In early 2021 the President had given directions to implement Large-Scale Social

Restrictions (PSBB). PSBB gives authority to regions to determine their regional policies. Regional heads who wish to implement large-scale social restrictions (PSBB) must obtain permission from the Minister of Health of the Republic of Indonesia (Kompas.com, 2021). Therefore, each region has policy innovations to stop the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic. With the policy in dealing with Covid-19, the community tries to respond to the extent of the effectiveness of the policies instructed by Isran Noor as Governor of East Kalimantan.

**Positive and Negative Responses from The Community to The Covid-19 Response Policy**



**Figure 2. Community Response**
**Source: Processed by Author**

The picture above shows that the leadership of the Governor's instruction policy in dealing with Covid-19 resulted in a positive and negative response. The positive response from the East Kalimantan community showed a figure of 21.43 per cent, while the adverse reaction from the East Kalimantan community showed a figure of 78.57 per cent. States that the policies of the Governor of East Kalimantan in the lower classes are still not appropriately implemented. The approach shows evidence of rational thinking on the part of the government. It is rationally acceptable to accept the logical reasons for this health problem. Some people, especially the lower middle class, tend to give varied responses. The Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia has resulted in social insecurity, and as a result, individuals are "forced" to make irrational decisions to solve problems. The solution lies in ensuring that every family has the economic security they need. So that the logic of the public sector and the general public will be the same in fighting the Covid-19 virus. The East Kalimantan Provincial Government has a red record in certain aspects of formulating policies dealing with Covid-19.

**Figure 3. Positive Response**
**Source: Processed by Author**

The positive response from community is on the economic aspect, which is slowly starting to recover. Financial sector, which is gradually recovering, shows a figure of 66.67%. In fact, in East Kalimantan, economic impact has increased or recovered. However, in East Kalimantan, no decisive action has been taken to overcome because Covid-19 is detrimental to situation. Other industries are not yet stable such as hotels, coal, mining and others. To avoid explosion of Covid-19 cases, East Kalimantan must consider the size of the area.

Meanwhile, the positive response from the policy sector showed 33.33 per cent. It states that the policies of the Governor and the Team have to the maximum. The Governor and his team have done everything possible to deal with Covid-19. In certain circumstances, the response is also fast, with several policies to address the case. In East Kalimantan, Covid-19 cases are rare compared to others, but the population in East Kalimantan is not too high.
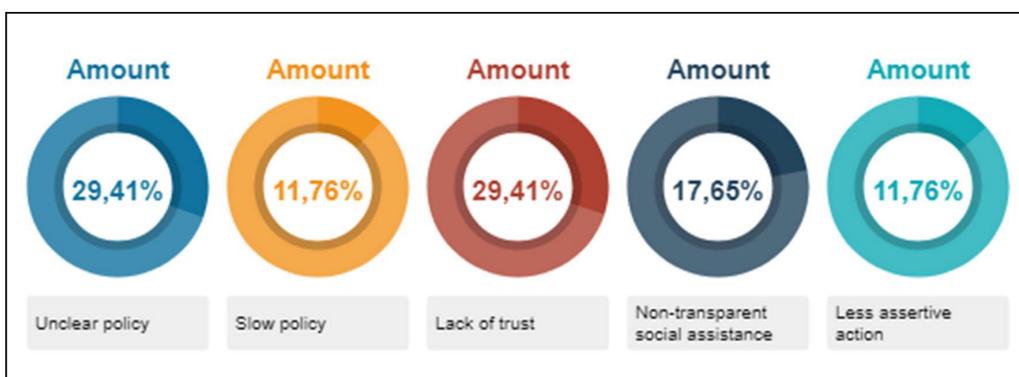


**Figure 4. Negative Response**
**Source: Processed by Author**

The people of East Kalimantan give five negative responses. Unclear policy directions contain a value of 29.41 per cent. Not too pushy to provide policies. There are no clear directions. The Governor only orders mayors and regents in the city/capital of East Kalimantan. For example, the East Kalimantan lockdown, or the so-called semi-lockdown of East Kalimantan for two days, most people obeyed for only two days, and it was inconsistent. There are no complex derivatives. It confuses people. As if someone feels sick, then directs them to call 102. That way, instead of picking up symptomatic patients, they wait for a reporting response from existing patients. Such a no-leaving home policy could lead to a further slump in the economy. The government must provide a solution, where the economy is increasingly difficult, especially for small and medium enterprises, to pursue intensive policies so as not to be frustrated with the current situation—policies that are still confusing and unclear. For example, people who do not have fixed finances have to sell on Saturdays and Sundays to meet. However, they cannot sell on Saturdays and Sundays because of the Governor's regulation. It prevents them from making ends meet. However, the shopping centre for goods in Samarinda did not close. The mall's closing hours are not restricted, and the market continues to function regularly. Although this policy is excellent, it has no impact on society and is still very confusing.

However, it is not only the direction of the policy which is not clear. The negative response from the community also provides statements related to the prolonged Covid-19 response policy. It has a value intensity of 11.76 per cent. The provincial government's strategy in handling the pandemic is arguably too late. Why? Because of many policies from several provinces in Java. The policies of the East Kalimantan provincial government are still following developments on the island of Java. There is no innovation in policy in handling Covid-19.

This negative response from the community also gives input to the government. With the adverse reaction to the policy, the public also believes that the government's policy can reduce public confidence in handling the Covid-19 pandemic. Thus, the intensity value on the variable of distrust of the government results in 29.41 per cent. The lousy impact is that people do not trust the leadership of Isran Noor. When viewed from the income or economic efficacy of the people of East Kalimantan, for example, they can still carry out Micro/Macro PPKM, people who want to do business will become a problem. The more crowded it will increase, the quieter it will decrease, and cause distrust from the community.

It's not just unclear policies, sluggishness, lack of trust from the public. However, the findings from other adverse responses, namely the non-transparency of social assistance, have a value of 17.56 per cent, by the less decisive action variable with a value of 11.76 per

cent. It doesn't matter even if the Governor wants to issue a crucial policy. But it can also provide a solution.

The opinion of the leadership of Isran Noor's political discourse in the policy to overcome the Covid-19 pandemic in East Kalimantan still gives a negative impression in the community. The magnitude of the negative response proves it compared to the positive as a benchmark or evaluation in implementing the Covid-19 response policy. The unknown policy answers delayed policies, lack of public confidence in Isran Noor in the struggle against Covid-19, the lack of openness in social support for the community and the government's lack of action for violations of the regional quarantine were the main facts.

In line with the dynamics and instability that occurred in society after introducing the strategy to prevent the spread of Covid-19. Three things that trigger noise, panic, and stress: first, the Mayor's instruction to prohibit Kendari City residents from leaving their homes for three consecutive days without clear social security; second, the issue of the arrival of Foreign Workers (TKA) from China, and third, the patient suspected of having the Coronavirus escaped from the inpatient room. Public responses to the government's controversial policies ranged from disobeying and violating health protocol standards to causing public unrest and uproar. Government policies must meet needs, solve problems, and improve people's welfare, not filled with controversy (Tuwu et al., 2021).
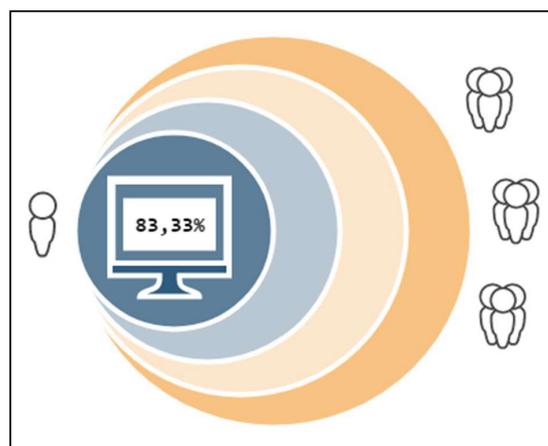
**Community Education Innovation**



**Figure 5. Opinion Leadership Innovation in Community Education**
**Source: Processed by Author**

Leadership in providing education through online media has had an enormous effect, as evidenced by the findings in essential competencies to educate the public, amounting to 83.33 per cent. Conveyed to the press about positive education things about dealing with Covid-19. By Instruction Letter Number 1 of 2021 concerning Control of the Covid-19 Outbreak in East Kalimantan Province and ordering all regions to implement PPKM, it also directs that people are not allowed to do activities outside the home every weekend. He said that East Kalimantan was clean from the COVID-19 pandemic, which is two days every weekend, Saturday and Sunday.

> "*We hope that the first and second stages of Covid-19 immunization can reduce the transmission of Covid-19 in the East Kalimantan region. The important thing is that the community must comply with the 5M health guidelines and discipline*" (Kaltim, 2021a).
>
> "*For this reason, I urge the entire community to remain vigilant with strict and regular health procedures. Keep wearing your mask, keep it smooth, avoid crowds and keep your distance*" (Kartono, 2021).
>
> "*I tell the public that I am not afraid to be vaccinated, especially for the elderly. The needle is small and doesn't feel anything, follow the directions. Vaccine injections are okay. These vaccines are also free and without conditions and are safe and halal*" (Kaltim, 2021b).

Based on the lead opinion that underlies political discourse amid the increasing Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia, the Governor of East Kalimantan always provides input regarding leadership political opinions that make educational discourses to all elements of society. However, the Governor always prioritizes speech through online media and the government's official website in providing the academic address.

State media seek to overcome the lousy news component, highlight the positive aspects, and draw public attention to the more dramatic news of foreign policy. The focus of public opinion on news items does not match the media agenda (Leafstedt, 2021). The use of news through TV, newspapers, websites and social networks to political knowledge. Moreover, the link between information (via Mass and Social Networks) and political awareness by vital media freedom and public service. Even in this era of social media, the media system plays an essential role in building a political learning environment (Park & Zúñiga, 2020). Innovation impacts leadership understanding in opinion, while extraversion affects social media leadership (Akdevelioglu & Kara, 2020). The Governor of East Kalimantan has made

online mass media, the provincial government's website, a component of discourse that provides education to the public in policies to overcome Covid-19. Based on the opinion of political leaders being one of the community centres.
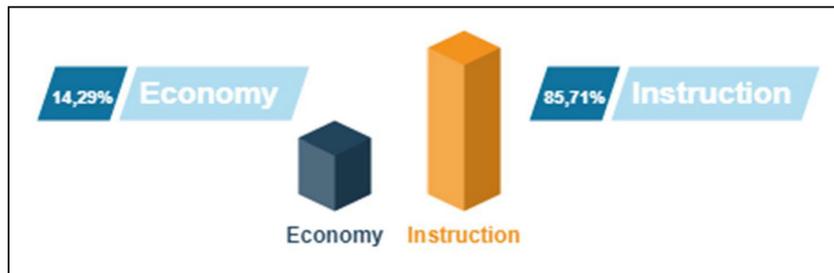
**Level of Expertise and Knowledge in Covid-19 Response**



**Figure 6. Leadership Skills and Knowledge**
**Source: Processed by Author**

In the opinion of the political leadership of the Governor of East Kalimantan, it also does not only provide educational innovations to the community. However, the level of expertise and knowledge underlies political discourse in providing positive news during the Covid-19 pandemic and instilling an understanding of Covid-19 prevention policies. Based on the picture above, two aspects form the basis for the expertise and knowledge of Governor Isran Noor, namely from the economic aspect with a total of 14.29 per cent. Evident in the message of opinion discourse, political leaders always pay attention to the financial factor.

On an economic level and in terms of policy, the East Kalimantan Governor's political speech emphasizes the policy components always mentioned in the mainstream media. The instruction contains an intensive value of 85.71 per cent. Also, report the procedures for justifying the disciplinary health protocol and the distribution of masks. We try for two days so that residents in East Kalimantan do not leave their homes for two days, and all government facilities, including markets, will be closed. This means that the spread of Covid-19 does not occur.

The Governor of East Kalimantan gave a leadership opinion on political discourse based on expertise and knowledge as the number one person in the province of East Kalimantan. It is to increase awareness of the impact of the pandemic and overcome it. Therefore, as a regional head, it is necessary to have a base of expertise and knowledge. Leadership is developed as a management task or often an expectation to take or set an example in a non-

administrative position (Hackstadt, 2020). Apart from expertise and knowledge as the basis of a political leader, however, a lack of formal leadership training and an unfavourable cultural contribution cause explicit and tacit knowledge gaps that hinder the intuitive decision-making process based on talent. The importance of this approach to the success of public sector-led sustainable development projects (Hanif et al., 2020).

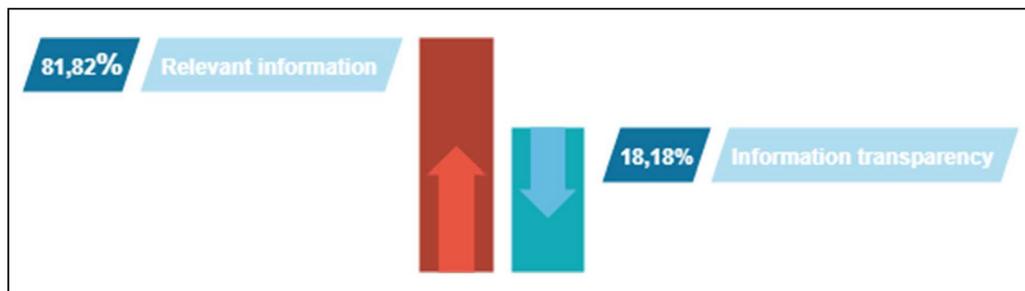## Transparency of Relevant Information during The Covid-19 Pandemic



**Figure 7. Information Transparency**
**Source: Processed by Author**

The image above shows transparency and relevant information based on the East Kalimantan Governor's political discourse to overcome the Covid-19 pandemic. The frequency obtained based on online media, and the official website of the East Kalimantan Provincial Government was 81.82 percent. The public needs the relevance of the information provided to know the developments and impacts of Covid-19. We hope that the number of patients will continue to decrease and not increase. Hopefully, Covid-19 will pass soon. However, the information transparency variable is exciting, with an intensity value of 18.18 percent. This value makes the intensity of information transparent from the government of East Kalimantan. If you look at this value, it is still minimal with the amount of transparency that the government should provide. Can create a sizeable gap between the views of public officials and organized civil society (Ruvalcaba-Gomez & Renteria, 2020). Aligning information asymmetry with transparency can have great benefits. Therefore, overall clarity should be improved (Mishory, 2013).

**Impact of Opinion Leadership**

Practices such as face-to-face communication have become an everyday activity in communication and can significantly influence a decision. However, in this case, social media, Twitter, Facebook, or other platforms are essential by playing a role, creating content to attract or legitimize political discourse in every activity of state political officials. Because with one click, you can see hundreds or even thousands of content by users who are the centre of attention. Using today's technology prevalence ensures that the impact doesn't end there. Political officials have positioned everyone with an opinion, in this case, their leadership opinion, to connect and become a stage for political discourse. As a result, it can affect everyone who sees it and becomes an added value in all political activities in the long term.

It Will be a safe bet, or this activity will be a source of playing it safe for political officials to spend all positive activities. Well-documented expertise and level of connectedness is one reason. To some extent, expertise is self-recognized, and perceptions may not match what happens in the reality of opinion leadership. What is central to opinion leadership and vital is the dissemination of ideas and arguments to persuade others to a large extent. These exciting ideas can be of five different types, each based on knowledge, education, expertise, innovation, media presence.

**CONCLUSION**

The lead opinion based on the political discourse of the Governor of East Kalimantan has several positive effects. As the opinion of political discourse that has a good impact on society, educational innovation is more substantial in the intensity of online news media and the official website of the East Kalimantan provincial government. There are also political discourse opinions that have the basis of competence or expertise, knowledge, and relevant information related to the Covid-19 response. The transparency in the statement on leadership discourse in online media and the government's official website shows a value of 18.18 per cent. The opinion of the leadership of the political discourse of the media and the official website of the East Kalimantan Provincial Government is higher, while the Governor's policy is still not appropriately implemented and not by what is given the lead opinion in the media and the official website. There is a discrepancy between political statements and implementation.

The opinion of the leadership of the Governor of East Kalimantan can play a central role in disseminating broad and exciting ideas based on ideas classified into five different types, each based on knowledge, education, expertise, innovation, media presence.

**ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

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