



Scrutinizing Civil Servants' Integrity in The Midst of Covid-19 Pandemic: A Netnographic Method

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Abstract

Integrity is one competency that civil servants must have. In this Covid-19 pandemic, civil servants' integrity becomes an observable focus. The Work from Home (WFH) system may highly change the way how they work at home. The research aims at scrutinizing integrity inferences of civil servants during the pandemic. WhatsApp, as an application used by them to communicate, has become a significant medium to observe the patterns. Netnography method is used to observe civil servants' community behavior on social media. From the inferences observation, it is discovered that they have demonstrated forms of integrity, such as responsibility and professionalism. The civil servants are also getting more solid, helping, and relying on each other. When conflict occurs, they will retain the right principle. On the other hand, some would balance the situation. Consistency and discipline sensed from how civil servants perceiving all-online-formats. To sum up, performing online duties during Work from Home (WFH) has shown forms of integrity among civil servants.

Keywords: Integrity, Civil Servants, Covid-19

Abstrak

Integritas merupakan salah satu kompetensi yang harus dimiliki seorang ASN. Dalam situasi pandemi Covid-19, integritas ASN menjadi sebuah fokus yang patut diobservasi. Sistem *Work from Home* (WFH) mau tidak mau mengubah cara kerja seorang ASN ketika berada di rumah. Tujuan dari penelitian ini untuk mengamati inferensi integritas ASN selama pandemi. WhatsApp, sebagai aplikasi yang digunakan para ASN untuk berkomunikasi menjadi media yang signifikan dalam mengamati pola-pola integritas tersebut. Metode netnografi digunakan untuk mengamati perilaku komunitas ASN pada media sosial. Dalam pengamatan inferensinya, ditemukan bahwa ASN telah menunjukkan bentuk-bentuk integritas seperti, tanggungjawab dan profesionalisme. Para ASN juga semakin solid, saling membantu, dan mengandalkan satu sama lain. Setiap sebuah konflik terjadi, mereka akan mempertahankan prinsip yang benar. Di sisi lain, ada yang menyeimbangkan situasi. Konsistensi dan kedisiplinan juga terlihat dari bagaimana ASN memandang format serba daring. Dapat disimpulkan bahwa performa dalam menyelesaikan tugas-tugas daring menunjukkan berbagai bentuk integritas para ASN.

Kata Kunci: Integritas, PNS, Covid-19

INTRODUCTION

Integrity among civil servants is an obliged competence to own. The root meaning of the term "integrity" based on Cambridge English Dictionary is bound up with a reference to wholeness and unity, the quality of being whole and complete. Montefiore

& Vines (2005: 7) draws its situation further to corruption which is believed to observe integrity as parasitic; it eats away or, like rust, corrodes that which was formerly unblemished or intact. Heywood, Marquette, Peiffer (2017) strengthens the concept by saying that acting with integrity means one cannot be

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acting corruptly. Thus, the civil servants should be people with absolute integrity, because it makes them performing duties and fulfills obligations properly.

Integrity can somehow be very dynamic towards the individuals. This competence is yet instilled since born, but ingrained into our character. It depends upon how the environment shapes this as competence. Takwin (2013) emphasizes that a person's integrity is influenced by the culture where he/she lives. The cultural message conveyed to the individual will determine how he/she interprets, understands, and then defines self. Based on this self-definition, the individual's integrity is then evaluated.

Let's take the example of new employee working within community interacts with its former employees who established unpunctuality as convention. He who comes along with high integrity would probably deteriorate punctuality. Soegiharto (2014: 96) also consolidates this issue over governmental condition, whenever a leader asks his subordinates to do something wrong, yet they have no courage to say "no". The situation can fall to somewhat called as compromise. This compromise later shapes a community to think what is wrong as tolerable, and transforms into habit.

During Covid-19's pandemic in Indonesia, The Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform Ministry (Kemenpan RB) issued several regulations officially over civil servants. Circular letter issued by Kemenpan RB and The State Personnel Agency (BKN) is the realization to Presidential Decree No. 11 year 2020 on the determination of public health emergency (Covid-19) for civil servants (ASN). The decree states ASN as permanent state servants must comply all policies with full integrity. Even though ASNs are considered having better situation than other regular workers who gained more negative impact against the outbreak in Indonesia, civil servants have to highly oblige the binding regulations still.

Based on circular letter of Kemenpan RB No. 46 year 2020, regulations made for civil servants during the outbreak are: 1) banning them from *mudik* or taking a leave; 2) imposing restrictions on leave (*cuti*); 3) requiring civil servants to share the location of their existence three times a day as supervision step from Kemenpan RB; 4) earning Idul Fitri's allowance (THR) less than what received previous year and it does not include performance allowances (*Tunjangan Kinerja*); 5) adjusting work system in form of Work from Home (WFH) as Coronavirus deployment prevention efforts in governmental environment. Civil servants'

promotion can be frozen for a year or demoted, as a consequence of violating the ban.

As what previously mentioned, scrutinizing civil servants' behavior has triggered the authors to observe their integrity inferences during this outbreak. However Work from Home system may rather change the way how civil servants working, also getting less interaction one another. WhatsApp application as communication media among civil servants has become a significant alternative for scrutinizing their behavior in recent times. WhatsApp can be regarded as a social network that allows people to access different information quickly (Cansoy, 2017).

Hence, the authors decide to use the application to observe civil servants' thoughts and shares, which later were examined within the context of how their integrity is performed. This is somewhat similar to Marcia and Garcia's research (2016) about investigating the effects of online communities of practice on ensuring the teachers' professional development. The study concerns about different aspects of their behaviors in online learning communities.

According to the premises above, the authors formulate the question on *How civil servants do perform their integrity during the Covid-19 pandemic via WhatsApp*. This study will be discussed and revealed by using netnography method.

Integrity Concepts

Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia online defines integrity as quality, nature, or circumstances that indicate the whole unity, so that it has the potential and ability to radiate authority and honesty. Integrity maintains a high level of honesty and ethics in the words and actions in our daily practices. It is also interpreted as consistent acting in accordance with the values and code of ethics. Similar to what Musschenga (2001) states, integrity is a person's internal consistency and coherence with his statements and actions.

"Integrity" has become a concept and topic with more prominence in research on government and governance, as well as in actual policy making at all levels (Huberts, 2018). The performance of employees in an organization cannot be separated from integrity and loyalty (Febrina & Syamsir, 2020). Integrity, therefore, is also reflected in government policy when handling Covid-19, notably what is referred to the Indonesian civil servants.

Integrity among Civil Servants

To build civil servants who have integrity, professionalism, neutrality, and are free from political inferences, Indonesian Government subsequently issued Law No. 5 year 2014 about State Civil Apparatus. ASN as a profession should notice the following principles (Article 3), a) basic values; b) code of ethics and code of conduct; c) commitment; moral integrity, and responsibility in the public service; d) competencies required in accordance with the tasks; e) academic qualification; f) guarantee legal protection in performing the task; and g) professionalism of office.

Basic values referred to in article 3 letter a covering:

- a) uphold the ideology of Pancasila;
- b) loyal and defend the Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia Year 1945 as well as the legitimate government;
- c) serve the country and people of Indonesia;
- d) perform their duties professionally and impartially;
- e) make decisions based on the principle of expertise;
- f) create a work environment that is nondiscriminatory;
- g) maintain and uphold the ethical standards are sublime;
- h) accountable for the actions and performance to the public;
- i) have the ability to implement government policies and programs;
- j) provide services to the public in an honest, responsive, fast, precise, accurate, efficient, effective, and well mannered;
- k) prioritize to high-quality leadership;
- l) appreciate communication, consultation, and collaboration;
- m) prioritize the achievement and encourage employee's performance;
- n) promote equality in employment; and
- o) improve the effectiveness of the system of democratic government as the career system.

Yusoff, Wahab, Washid, and Samsuddin (2019) treat integrity values to the word of excellence. A civil servant who performs his duties with integrity can achieve excellence. Thus, a committed public servant would produce qualified tasks in an efficient and quick way. In the intervening time, the services rendered to the customer are well-executed and polite.

Traits of Integrity

Integrity concerns behavior, process, and procedure in a broad sense (Hubert 2018). The content is not only output, but also outcome to society. Hubert (2014:

39-44) further elaborates keywords of integrity as characteristics, like coherence; professional responsibility; moral reflection; value(s) like incorruptibility, laws and rules; moral values and norms; and exemplary behavior.

Dobel (1999, 2016) precises other perspectives focus on one or more other specific values for example, incorruptibility; honesty; impartiality; accountability as also in many codes of conduct.

As stated in Indonesian Law No. 5 Year 2014 Article 5, the code of ethics and code of conduct referred to article 3 paragraph b aims to safeguard the dignity and honor of ASN or civil servants. The code of ethics and code of conduct referred to the statement contains settings that civil servants' behavior have to:

- a) perform their duties honestly, responsibly, and with high integrity;
- b) perform their duties carefully and with discipline;
- c) serve with respect, courtesy, and without pressure;
- d) carry out their duties in accordance with the legislation's provisions;
- e) carry out their duties in accordance with the orders of superiors or the Authorized Officer to the extent not inconsistent with the provisions of legislation and government ethics;
- f) maintain confidentiality regarding state policy;
- g) use the wealth and state property responsibly, effectively, and efficiently;
- h) guard against conflicts of interest in performing their duties;
- i) provide information correctly and not to mislead others who need information regarding the interests of official;
- j) not abuse the internal state information, tasks, status, power, and position to obtain or seek profit or benefit for themselves or for others;
- k) uphold the basic values of the ASN and always maintain the reputation and integrity of the ASN; and
- l) implement the provisions of the legislation regarding ASN's discipline.

METHOD

This study was designed in a netnographic research model. Kozinets (2015) elucidates netnography as a qualitative interpretive research methodology that adapts traditional ethnographic techniques to the study of social media. He also draws the method as a faster, simpler, and less

expensive than traditional ethnography, more naturalistic and unobtrusive than focus groups or interviews (2012). This research is also other form of Cansoy's manifestation (2017) who once successfully applied the method to examine teacher's professional development observed in WhatsApp where the information is transferred.

The WhatsApp observation is naturalistic which means the subject's behavior without any attempts is controlled or manipulated. The representative data gained naturally, so the external validity is fine (Baskoro, 2009). Convenience sampling was used in the selection of the study group in terms of the speed and practice of the research (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014).

In this study, the messages (chats) observed are those that shared by 27 civil servants Widayaiswara (Instructors) on one specialized WhatsApp group. The data include WhatsApp posts covering Covid-19 period between March until May 2020. It comprised 13733 sentences, yet only less than hundreds distinctive integrity references were accepted as document and analyzed to reduce qualitative data (Patton, 2002). The authors observed text messages, but not sound, photographs, or videos. The authors used QDA Miner Lite to assist identifying civil servants' integrity references and coded it. The institution was selected as the authors have been working and teaching there in these past few years.

Codes below are divided based on the compilation of references (Indonesian Law; Dobel; Hubert):

- a) Shares for commitment and loyalty: refers to factors ranging from strong beliefs, way of life, environmental influences, and the ability to cope with the issues.
- b) Shares for responsibility and professionalism: emphasizes on willing to take risks, improve circumstances, and perform duties at its best.
- c) Shares for honesty and trustworthiness: emphasizes the words which in line with deeds.
- d) Shares for consistency: remains on establishment (not shaky). The right attitude and decisions are taken in terms of accurate facts, clear objectives, and wise consideration.
- e) Shares for discipline: means self-control, a regular and balanced attitude of life.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Shares for commitment and loyalty

It is observed that civil servants made shares related to their integrity on strong beliefs and way of life. In the mid of Covid-19' barriers, they seemed support each other morally and professionally.

- *[P12]: Thanks colleagues. Let's improve our class management and material mastery, so that the training's quality is even better.*
- *[P5]: I'm not feeling well but still typing for the report. Hehe...*
- *[P1]: Throughout the pandemic, the regular trainings'll be shifted to many online forms. So now, the distance learning is on massive setting. Our head section said in the morning discussion that there will be a quite change over the system. Please be patient these two incoming days, and let's support each other to create more innovative performance on this distance learning.*

The civil servants also heavily handled the conflicts based on their faith to God, after did their best version of effort.

- *[P18]: Let's believe. Our sustenance is governed by Allah, isn't it?*
- *[P22]: Dear colleagues, the contract employees face hard times these days, so let's collect the donation for them Sunday, 11th of May at the latest. We're distributing the donation on next Tuesday. Thanks for those who have participated. May it be a pious charity and God wills. Amen.*

The environmental influences trigger the civil servants to communicate more effectively during the pandemic. They also remained to be obedient towards the governmental policy to make less conflicts.

- *[P6]: To discuss further about this decision, let's do the meeting if it's possible.*
- *[P13]: For the instructors who'd like to switch, please kindly negotiate it with others. The coordinator does not treat one as special. Compromise what available time and where location suited to your needs.*
- *[P7]: Excellent! Being instructor encourages us to not stop learning. Don't hesitate to ask other more capable colleagues.*
- *[P22]: Well, the ministry instructed us to Work from Home. Obey it then.*
- *[P2]: Is the news valid? Really, we're working from home till May? I hope the condition'll be back to normal after 21st. Also back to work as usual. WFH to me, isn't the same with WFO.*

- [P12]: *WFH is extended again? Ok, let's wait the valid instruction from our leader.*
- [P2]: *Are you at office? Wow, you're such a diligent Mr.P11! The servant who works with full integrity. Applause.*

Shares for responsibility and professionalism.

Civil servants demonstrated responsibility signs before and after the pandemic. Some reminded to fulfill their duties on time, work effectively, and stop being money oriented.

- [P22]: *Today, P2 will disseminate the ToT's results he joined. Please come at 10.00 to the main hall 1st floor. Thanks.*
- [P7]: *Yes, for the colleagues who have yet taught at the regular trainings please not to say NO. Don't always put MoU as your priority, yet your MUST DO is procrastinated.*
- [P7]: *Just a reminder. Performance report 2019 dan performance objectives 2020 have already been collected by 9 colleagues. As if you have already submitted to the human resources division, please confirm.*
- [P22]: *Greeting. To smoothen the administration of training participants' certificate making, please check the post-test results after teaching, and report the scores to the committee ASAP. Thanks.*
- [P13]: *Greeting. To all colleagues, please kindly score the participants with minimum requirements. And also pay attention to the active participants, so that they won't be dissapointed. Just a reminder. Thanks.*

There are several indications that the colleagues also reminded one another on how to be professional over their job, among others are to watch over the learning materials concerned with the training's background, complete instructed requirements, or even register an examination to higher the level of competence.

- [P23]: *Talking about being professional, we should look back to the regulation then. Who would confess it???*
- [P7]: *To all colleagues who are teaching preschool teachers, please consider the uniqueness. We are urged to prepare the complete references about the learning barriers at preschools. Don't let them think that we are not ready yet on this.*

- [P4]: *Greeting. To all of my friends who'd like to submit their working credits to the State Administration Agency (LAN), please report.*
- [P6]: *Please check the list of the examination competence below. Poke the coordinator to the follow-up.*

Shares for honesty and trustworthiness

In the shares, most civil servants ensure other to be thorough and objective towards the participant's performance.

- [P22]: *This issue has been clarified by the section head. We are further expected to score proportionally and to save the files. Who knows that it is committee's matter.*

There are also some cases that they highly count on two trusted colleagues and they reported every news transparently.

- [P1]: *Colleagues, I've proposed and revised one online training, so the total's be 27 trainings.*
- [P6]: *Morning pals. I've communicated with National Accreditation Agency (BAN) about the preparation of examination, which will be conducted online. For those who are selected, and successfully verified, please check the website regularly. The schedule of exam'll be held on April or May.*

Trustworthiness can also be seen from how civil servants ask to gain more knowledge to a colleague who is believed as more capable in one special field. They also help one another in difficult times, notably in this pandemic situation.

- [P22]: *Well, most of our colleagues are having such expertise. They could help us. I suggest to conduct internal trainings to make it as our credits. Only a comment.*
- [P4]: *Partners, as if you need a hand on bringing along the basic foods during this pandemic, I'll help.*

Shares for consistency

The consistency is observed when the civil servants took an attitude to convince others about something-- which is believed as something right. When the conflicts occurred, they would take a stance persistently.

- [P23]: *I believe the portion must be reduced, since what is urgent is its development, depth, and the mastery.*
- [P12]: *Ya, I can't stand that we're blamed as wrong this whole time. While this training management is a collaboration. Working team. Where the committee goes?*
- [P14]: *We could argue if having strong data so that we could be more objective. I disagree with the opinion that the absence matter is on the committee. We can't rely on them. It's our responsibility too.*

However, when problem happened, other colleagues tried not to blame other side or decided to take wise consideration.

- [P4]: *Thanks for the info. We've to anticipate to make it not happen twice. Just clarify and decide the criteria, whether it is competent or not.*

Shares for discipline

The civil servants' discipline is seen from how they run the administration and time matters. In the Covid-19 pandemic, all workers are having their duties at home and by online, even for the presence and files submittance.

- [P5]: *Tomorrow's still WFH. Don't forget to always standby at 9 a.m and 2 p.m for Zoom Meeting, colleagues.*
- [P6]: *Partners, don't skip the online presence! It's every 7.30 and 16.00, OK?*
- [P19]: *Thanks to God. I've set the alarm every weekdays, morning and afternoon.*
- [P10]: *Don't go strolling this pandemic, pals. Moreover, be available for the online meeting at 9 now. Don't miss it!*
- [P7]: *Ok, I've got your performance reports 2019 dan performance objectives 2020. For those who have not submitted it yet, just do by yourself.*

In the part of shares commitment and loyalty, integrity could be deemed through mental and professional supports, as well as effective communication. Though the negative premise somehow contradicts with Soegiharto (2014), yet it shows that such good compromise also occurs among workers of government. The culture of being faith to God born the civil servant to be a person with integrity (Takwin, 2013).

The reason underlying why ASNs must keep their integrity is because they are bound to commitment and moral integrity principles (Law No.5 year 2014). The law is also in line with civil servants' responsibility and professionalism. During pandemic, colleagues set targeted time as usual, and have intention to achieve excellence in their profession (Yusoff, Wahab, Washid, and Samsuddin, 2019).

Sense of fairness is seen from ASNs' honesty and trustworthiness. As stated in the basic values of article 3 (Law No.5 year 2014), the servants should create a work environment that is nondiscriminatory. The article 5 also states that the civil servants should provide information correctly and not to mislead others who need information regarding the interest of official.

Observing the idealism of civil servants might represent their consistency over issues occurred in surroundings. The consistency to obey the rules even in online formats is regarded to exemplary behavior, the same as discipline (Hubert, 2014). Thus, committed public servant must have certain qualifications when performing task, with the aim that self-integrity can be assuredly realized.

CONCLUSION

Civil servants' integrity during Covid-19 pandemic is rather dynamic. Their integrity is discussed from how they dealt with the condition. Most of them demonstrated to finish work on time and achieved certain competences. They also take responsibility and professionalism in performing their job. In the shares, most civil servants are also encouraged to be thorough and objective. The pandemic makes all civil servants are even more solid, help, and count on each other. Whenever the conflict happens, they would hold the right principle and take it as a stance. On the other hand, other colleagues would balance the situation. Consistency and discipline are perceived in both time and administration matters. Performing online duties during Work from Home (WFH) has shown forms of integrity among civil servants.

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