

People's Consumptive Behavior on the Reaction of Government Regulation to Fuel Price Increase

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ABSTRACT

The adjustment to the fuel price increase occurred again, this is the second time President Joko Widodo has made this policy. Various reactions that occur in society related to massive information in the media make various behavior changes that are quite significant. Among them are consumptive behaviors to obtain excessive products outside the main needs. The problem discussed in this study is the reaction caused by the exposure of information on a government policy. As well as feedback in the form of follow-up communication in the form of changes in community behavior and the phenomenon of rapid reactions that occur to these stimulants (news of fuel increases). This study aims to analyze the reaction of public behavior to the actions made by the government, in the form of fuel price increase policies, based on the S-R (*Stimulus - Response*) communication model. The method used in this study is an ethnographic method with a qualitative approach. The ethnographic method is carried out for the analysis of sociocultural life in the form of community behavior individually and in groups according to local culture. From this research, it can be concluded that government regulations set as government policies for adjusting fuel price increases can cause reactions in the community. The S-R communication model can show that the action of information in the media that the communicant receives as an organism, can give rise to a variety of direct reactions in return. Such as long queues and *panic buying* behavior.

ABSTRAK

Penyesuaian kenaikan harga BBM terjadi kembali, ini kali kedua Presiden Joko Widodo membuat kebijakan tersebut. Berbagai reaksi yang terjadi di masyarakat terkait informasi massif di media membuat berbagai perubahan perilaku yang cukup signifikan. Diantaranya perilaku konsumtif untuk mendapatkan produk berlebihan di luar kebutuhan utama. Permasalahan yang dibahas dalam penelitian ini adalah reaksi yang ditimbulkan dari terpaan informasi sebuah kebijakan pemerintah. Serta feedback berupa komunikasi lanjutan berupa perubahan perilaku masyarakat dan fenomena reaksi cepat yang terjadi atas stimultan tersebut (berita kenaikan BBM). Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisa reaksi perilaku masyarakat atas aksi yang dibuat pemerintah, berupa kebijakan kenaikan harga BBM, berdasarkan model komunikasi S-R (*Stimulan-Response*). Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah metode etnografi dengan pendekatan kualitatif. Metode etnografi dilakukan untuk analisa kehidupan sosial budaya berupa perilaku masyarakat secara individu maupun kelompok sesuai kultur setempat. Dari penelitian ini dapat disimpulkan bahwa regulasi pemerintah yang ditetapkan sebagai kebijakan pemerintah atas penyesuaian kenaikan harga BBM dapat menimbulkan aksi reaksi di masyarakat. Model komunikasi S-R dapat menunjukkan bahwa aksi berupa informasi di media yang diterima komunikan sebagai organisme, dapat menimbulkan beragam reaksi langsung sebagai timbal balik. Seperti antrian panjang dan perilaku *panic buying*.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The end of the increase in cooking oil prices at the beginning of 2022 is not enough to create *shock therapy* and an economic crisis in the society. Public anxiety continues with the revocation of fuel oil (fuel) subsidies, especially *Pertalite*. This eventually sparked a lively debate in the media and audience. The pros and cons that rise to the surface continue to flow, be it in social media, news in electronic media, to citizen demonstrations. The pros and cons can be caused by several factors, such as the timing of the news, the type of news, and the type of government policy that can affect the perception of the content of a news story (Rustam, 2022). Although various speculations arise, the regulations set by the ruler or government are still a reference that must be obeyed by all elements of society.

Fuel price adjustments have occurred from the tenure of previous presidents to the current President Joko Widodo. People are familiar with the impact. The crawling of fuel prices this time is inseparable from the increase in world oil prices, then the Russian-Ukrainian conflict which has an impact on the stalling of production turnover in oil-producing countries (Hrp & Aslami, 2022). Thus, the government as a policy holder has a role to get solution and steps to stabilize the country's economy by adjusting fuel prices.

Like previous experiences, the problem of rising fuel prices has always been a frightening scourge for all elements of society. This is because the increase in fuel is always accompanied by an increase in the price of other basic necessities, nine staples (*sembako*), and the cost of production in industry, distribution, and others. Which of course affects all aspects of the economy of citizens. The *gap* that arises is when the increase in fuel prices occurs not accompanied by an increase in living standards, such as an increase in salary / income. At the beginning of the Joko Widodo – Jusuf Kalla period (2014 – 2019), the increase was set to receive a rejection from the public, because it was felt to be very burdensome for the lower middle class economy which also affected the increase in the price of basic necessities while people's income did not change (TRIPUTRA & Mujibussalim, 2017). So that residents until now continue to protest in various ways against all forms of increases, especially the increase in fuel prices.

Protest is a form of behavior of a person's rejection of something undesirable. Public protests against the fuel price adjustment have occurred in various media in the form of scathing comments, expert views, to mainstream news of the media crew. In this decade, protests have been widely carried out on social media platforms as an effective communication tool (Apriyani, 2021). The increase in fuel prices that have been considered normal but always surprises all Indonesians a few years ago certainly has an impact on changing behavior towards the consumptive community. The provisions of the regulation, which are immediately carried out with a certain time limit, make people *panic buying*.

Panic buying behavior is consumer behavior in purchasing products or goods in large quantities or in unusual quantities, in anticipation of an event that causes a shortage in the need for goods, such as the fear of an increase in cost of goods (Loxton et al., 2020). The feeling of fear or anxiety experienced towards extreme or unexpected situations will affect human behavior. This feeling encourages a person to take actions that can provide certainty over the situation (Dulam et al., 2021) Thus, the consumptive behavior that occurs when the issue of fuel increase rolls around, causes chaos in the community.

In consumer behavior, there is a stimulus – response (S-R) theory or stimulus – organism – response (SOR) model that explains the relationship between the stimulus caused to humans as organisms, and produces a form of response from these humans (Hardianto, 2019). In this case, the public as an organism is exposed to stimulus in the form of information on a policy of adjusting

fuel prices. Then, resulting in an action or an action's audience in the form of *panic buying* or other consumptive behavior to cause chaos and queues at many gas stations, this action is a response. The S-R model is the simplest reaction action process, which can be interpreted as a process of transferring or exchanging information that has reciprocity as an effect, and each effect that arises changes a subsequent action (Dedy, 2012). The theory proposed by Houland (1953) comes from the field of psychology, which was later applied in communication science. This is because the objects of study of psychology and communication have similarities, namely in humans who have components such as opinions, attitudes, perceptions, affections and cones (Rahmat Abidin & Abidin, 2021). Thus, this can be used as a basic assumption of the theory that a stimulus as a quality of stimulation that communicates with the communicant as an organism will cause behavioral changes (Yasir, 2009).

This is a concern for researchers, that the rapid reaction that occurs in the community is the result of a stimulus to government regulations related to the increase in fuel which is considered surprising and one-sided.

II. RESEARCH METHOD

In this study, researcher used ethnographic method with a qualitative approach. Ethnography is a method that investigates culture and society by describing how human behavior is both individual and groups influenced by the culture they occupy (Wijaya, 2018). This method conducts research analysis into the field. So that researcher conducted a direct survey to several gas stations located in Serang City - Banten and carried out information that flowed rapidly on social media about queues and various responses that occurred due to reactions from fuel price adjustment information.

Ethnography aims to show descriptive observations about socio-cultural life. This qualitative study can describe a more profound cultural character in time and space systematically. In communication science, the ethnography of communication derives from a paradigm an interpretive as well as constructivist. The interpretive perspective aims to understand and explain social phenomena, while the constructivist perspective is to understand how people interact through the phenomena of daily life (Wijaya, 2018).

The data collection carried out by researcher in this study is by observation participation, whose activities are observing as well as participating in socio-cultural activities or activities that are being studied. The observations carried out include direct observation at a number of gas stations during the incident by purchasing *Pertalite* fuel and entering the queue. In addition, observations were also carried out on the social media line for several days after the increase. In qualitative research, researchers do not have to do direct observations, they can also use in-depth interviews, or just use documents for analysis. Random selection of samples is not absolute because the results obtained are not intended to be generalized to a population. The priority is that the selection of cases is based on a distinctive one as a research subject (Mulyana, 2013).

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Public Reaction to Government Regulation on Fuel Price Increase

The government in making policies is of course based on many considerations. The government, as a political actor who has the power to do so, has the authority to regulate the lives of many people. One of them is the policy of adjusting fuel price increases. Policies are made so that there is a change for the better in terms of solving existing problems (Rizkyanoor et al., 2017). The government has the authority to make policies, so that every problem faced by the state is solved. Policy after policy has been made by many governments, both pros and cons. Public welfare is the government's goal in making decisions. The process, which has become a general policy as a government policy, is the result of the decision process of various alternatives that have finally been established (Budiardjo, 2017). For this reason, fuel price adjustment is one of the policies of a

political group that has the authority, in this case the government, as a policy to achieve common goals.

Everyone has the right to freedom of association, assembly, and expression. As stated in article 28 of the 1945 Constitution, that people as Indonesian citizens have the right to express their opinions regarding matters that have not been considered fair. Adjusting the fuel price increase is one of the policies that the government has carried out several times every term of office. And this was also done for the second time by the Joko Widodo regime in the second period of his term of office to make the public feel injustice because it was considered a decision that against the people.

The increase in fuel prices always has an impact on increasing other cost of goods, such as clothing, food, transportation costs, company production costs, and others. Thus, the economy of residents after the increase has changed. People must adjust to all increases that are sometimes not accompanied by an increase in income. This gap makes people anxious about the ability to meet their daily needs.

A form of anxiety when knowing the policy on increasing fuel prices as of September 1, 2022, encourages people's behavior to buy excess fuel without thinking about the needs of others. Consumptive behavior actually arises to fulfill self-satisfaction even though the goods or services no longer provide more benefits (Mujahidah, 2021). However, fuel has become the main need of the community in the turnover of the economy and daily life, so any form of regulation that can change the shape of the community's economy will be of particular concern. Thus, changes in behavior in the form of long queues at each gas station, a sense of wanting to buy in large quantities for storage stock, occur simultaneously throughout Indonesia.

When the queue until the change of day arrives, it turns out that the fuel price has not changed. This policy, which is considered half decisional, makes people guess what will happen. This reaction makes people no longer *panic buying* or consumptive behavior in fulfilling daily needs.



Picture 1. Fuel Prices have not changed

In the end, the adjustment of fuel price increases as a regulation set by the government has not been officially passed. The fuel price at the beginning of September 2022 is still Rp. 7,650/liter for *Pertalite*, and other fuel prices have not changed.

When the atmosphere of public anxiety began to decline, on September 3, 2022, the government announced about the fuel price adjustment that will be officially implemented starting that day. The decision was immediately inaugurated an hour after the announcement, thus creating a variety of reactions in the community to the sudden arrival of the envoy. There are people who feel that they are being *pranked* by the government. The public felt that the decision was too soon so that the reaction in the form of long queue every gas station monitored through social media did not appear to be circulating. Massively, social media and other mass media also carried out the news, this made the audience surprised but could not do anything. Their

assumptions about sudden decisions when people are busy at work and focused on their busy lives, rise to the surface. Policies like this, of course, reduce people's trust in the government, that the pros and cons that occur in reaction to any information will not have an impact on the government's decision.



Picture 2. The News of Fuel Price Increase



Pictur 3. The News of Fuel Price Increase



Picture 4. The News of Fuel Price Increase

In reality, the price of fuel remains rising. The decision to increase was announced in a press conference by the Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources (ESDM) Arifin Tasrif with President Joko Widodo that the price of *Pertalite* subsidized fuel rose to 10,000 per liter, subsidized diesel to 6,800 per liter and non-subsidized *Pertamax* to 14,500 per liter.

The reaction action generated from this sudden information occurs. An action in the form of an official decision regarding the adjustment of fuel prices, according to the S-R communication model, will receive both positive and negative reactions. The public's reaction to this policy on fuel price regulation appears in various forms of narratives, actions in the form of rejections, and statements of rejection of a political party organization. This variety of reactions occurs as a reciprocal communication of the stimulant in the form of information that is predominantly contra in society. Finally, the community inevitably had to agree to the policy. Protest behavior that could change price increases is no longer possible. The audience can only be opinionated or vent their disappointment in the virtual world. Because, the policies that have been passed are coercive in nature and citizens must comply. The government policy was chosen as an alternative through the decision-making process (Budiardjo, 2017).

The government as a public organization is required by the public to provide services to the needs of the public, which has been mandated in the constitution as a guideline. The government has challenges in meeting public expectations, with various stakeholders, so that *Good Government* can be created (Widjajanti & Sugiyanto, 2017). Good Government will be created if the principles of governance are achieved properly.

Public Behavior on Fuel Price Increase

Before September 1, 2022, it has been blowing in the community about the issue of the government's plan to eliminate RON 90 or *Pertalite* type fuel. The pros and cons continue to roll on the social media front, the result of various citizen anxieties about the decision. The amount of news in the media as a stimulus to the audience, makes the audience react in the comments columns of social media. This is in accordance with the communication theory of S-R model, as a reaction action, which has many effects as reciprocity that can change the subsequent communication action (Dedy, 2012). When the government made a policy that was announced to its citizens, then various citizen reactions emerged. The action that a person causes, in this case the effect of government policy, creates both positive and negative reactions. Positive reaction means that the community approves of this discourse, while negative reaction means that the community protests and does not support the discourse.

At the end of August 2022, the public was surprised by the issue of fuel increase which will be enforced as of September 1, 2022. This information elicits a variety of reactions, which results in advanced forms of communication in the audience. Various queues at each gas station made other residents who did not know also give their panic reactions. In the gas station queue there are also many attempts by someone to buy more, citing it as stock and fear of inability to buy it back. The panic makes people behave consumptively in getting goods, even if it is not an urgent matter.



Picture 5. Cipocok Jaya Gas Station



Picture 6. Ciceri Gas Station

Until late at night at 00:00 am, the gas station queue was still going on. This information that was present on social media and other media further caused panic among the public as a form of reaction to the stimulus in the form of information on fuel price increases. The information rolled out by the government, as a stimulus according to the S – R model, shapes a society's behavior into consumptive, panicking and issuing various opinions as a sign of disapproval. One of them is *panic buying* behavior, where the audience tries to buy more needs (fuel) and does not think that others can be met or not. In an empirical observation effort, researchers entered the vehicle queue the night before the predetermined time (00.00 am). It is known that, the surrounding community is indeed flocking to the refueling place, to get the old fuel price. People are willing to wait in long queues even though *Pertalite* has run out.



Picture 7. Motorcycle Queue at Cipare Gas Station



Picture 8. Rare Pertalite

Picture 7 shows the dense queues at one of the gas station in Serang City, Cipare. In addition to the queue of four-wheeled vehicles, two-wheelers are increasingly coming to each gas station. This is the result of actions in the form of information conveyed by the media, so that the quick reaction received by the audience is nonverbal actions as in the pictures above. In addition to the

increase in fuel at the turn of the day at that time, another thing that the community felt was the scarcity of *Pertalite* type fuel. In some places of gas stations, *Pertalite* is not found. So inevitably people buy the first type of fuel, in the hope that if tomorrow is already with a higher price change.

With word-of-mouth (WOM) and Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM) communication, this *Pertalite* scarcity info spreads and makes people panic. So that the change in behavior as a reaction shown is the willingness to queue until the evening before the turn of the day. WOM is the oldest type of communication in the delivery of information. (Huete-Alcocer, 2017). The exchange of information between a person and others in such a way can play a fundamental role in the form of their behavior and change attitudes towards that information (Katz et al., 2017). This change in behavior is unconsciously carried out by the community simultaneously, plus various news that endlessly makes the mindset of the audience unable to think clearly. One of them is the effort to buy excessive consumption, aka the desire to hoard. Changes in selfish behavior to master, due to the power of qualified wealth, plus impatient behavior in queuing because fear and anxiety are not rationed.

Consumer behavior can be in the form of considering and thinking about when making decisions before buying the product (Dharmawan & Oktafani, 2022). In this case, the public was stimulated by massive information related to the increase in fuel prices, and in consideration they finally decided sooner to buy the product (Fuel).

In fact, the public was confused by the government's policies. Because the next day is exactly on September 1, 2022, fuel prices have not experienced price adjustments. This information also causes a reaction in the community, as a form of mutual communication to info and reality on the ground. This can lead to a reduction in *trust value* in the ruler. When the community gives confidence to the government in every decision-making, to the point that it makes people run out of fuel *Pertalite*, the government instead builds poor communication so as to cause feedback on dissatisfaction in the public. Consumer trust is a perception of the experience of expectations and consumer satisfaction that can be fulfilled (Widjajanti & Sugiyanto, 2017). The feeling of relief because fuel prices do not rise mixed with feelings of confusion and anxiety about sudden information next makes the audience wonder. This can degrade the government's reputation in the eyes of its citizens. The information distributed by the government is not yet comprehensive, or the information is still partial. For this reason, good organizational management is needed, in this case government management, to increase public trust again with a series of control processes in the form of *planning*, *organizing*, and *controlling*, to achieve common goals according to common expectations (Wahib, 2020).

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the communication theory of the S-R (Stimulus-Response) model, that the action that a person causes will get a reaction. It can be verbal, non-verbal communication, images, actions to get responses and reciprocity as follow-up communication. In this study, the action that occurred was an information in the form of a government decision related to the adjustment of fuel price increases, this is called *stimulus*. Then it was responded by a group of people as *organism* who had received the information either through online media or other mass media, to word of mouth. The response that occurs in the community is a *reaction*, as a response to the action (decision to increase fuel). Various reactions emerged from scathing comments in the virtual universe, narratives in the form of rejection or statements of disapproval continued to flood the comments section of social media.

The relationship of reaction actions according to this S-R model, forms a change in behavior in society. These include consumptive behavior; want to buy more than necessary before fuel prices rise which eventually becomes a form of fuel hoarding, panic buying; behavior in getting products without rethinking because of feelings of anxiety and fear of not being able to ration fuel before fuel prices rise, and willing to wait in long queues until late at night even though there is a void of

Pertalite-type materials everywhere. The next surprise is that the government has not officially increased fuel prices as previously rumored, but on September 3, 2022 at 02.30 pm the decision was officially enforced with an interval of only one hour of announcement. This action also caused a reaction in the community, in the form of confusion, shock, the decision to queue at gas stations, and others.

For this reason, when someone brings up an action in any form, they will immediately get a reaction as communication feedback on the spot. Thus, the behavior of the public when they get information on fuel price policies immediately gets a wave of pros and cons.

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