

Anxiety by COVID-19 Death Reports: Explanatory Study among Jakarta's Muslim Young Adults

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Abstract: *The convergence of technology has led to a mass appearance in digital users worldwide. News media must also distribute their news broadcasts using the new advanced technology. In addition, the initial lethality of COVID-19 has led Indonesians astray with the chaos at the beginning of the pandemic. The research aims to identify how COVID-19 news exposure by Republika.co.id can affect the increased anxiety levels of Jakarta's young adults aged 15-24 years old. Quantitative research uses a positivistic paradigm and a survey method to collect the primary data, whereas secondary data is collected through past surveys related to the study. The collected data will then be tested for validity and reliability before both data variables are tested with the Correlation Test and Coefficient Determination Test. The research results with 100 respondents implicate that the COVID-19 Pandemic news exposure by Republika.co.id is highly correlated to the increase of anxiety levels of Jakarta's young adults. The effect of this exposure is based at 23,6%, which is a moderate level. The other 76,4% causing the increase in anxiety levels were external factors that were excluded from this research topic.*

Keywords: *News Exposure, COVID-19, Anxiety Levels, Young Adults, Online Media*

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INTRODUCTION

People in the current times have adapted themselves to modernity, especially technology. Adaptation requires online media to distribute more information to the general public in response to the convergence of technology (Chinmi et al., 2021; Kurniawati et al., 2021). Lembaga Statistik Indonesia (LSI), or Indonesia's Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), confirms in their data that productive citizens aged between 15-64 year-old use technology with the most efficiency. This is due to their adaptability to technological changes. Technology will continue to expand as civilization progresses, creating a massive change to humans' quality of life and lifestyle

(Chinmi & Marta, 2020).

One of the biggest technological advancements was the birth of the internet. Its ease of access to every piece of information possible has made the internet the most prevalent technology. Internet and its digital universe have allowed the entire civilization to remain connected despite being separated by time and space. Therefore, trends are constantly circulating and creating a new culture that adapts to all up-to-date trends across the world (Gandakusumah & Marta, 2021). Online news facilitates those trends to audiences thanks to their accessibility. This makes online media a bridge between updated trends to a wide variety of audiences (Chinmi et

al., 2020). Online media creates a new interaction environment to people due to these reasons.

Since the rise of online media, audiences are easier to receive information and news regarding various phenomena worldwide. All information is viewed, read, and compared to different online media that distributed them. Some even showed different perspectives while narrating similar topics (Harry et al., 2021; Samiaji et al., 2022). Audiences can also filter out information that is considered necessary for them. The ease of online information access through digital gadgets, such as smartphones, can determine how the audience filters their information gathering (Fernando et al., 2020). As technology advances, instances of news media are required to adapt to all the possible changes to remain competitive in the news distribution industry (Lumampauw et al., 2020). Of all online information sources in Indonesia, *Republika.co.id* marks itself as one of the most active information providers according to Indonesia Indicator (I2). In fact, in 2020, the online news website in Indonesia delivered and disseminated 100,748 news.

Indonesia gained its infamy due to the huge population of Muslims in the country. Such high numbers create a different identity for different Muslim communities in one region (Marta, Riyanti, et al., 2022; Rodríguez-García & Rodríguez-Reche, 2022). This plays a major part for Indonesian young adults Muslim as the future representation of Indonesia's religious community. Fauzi & Fasta (2020) noted that this identity would affect other's perspectives towards Indonesian Muslims through the younger generations. Online media will deliver such perspective to audiences across the nation or globe; *Republika* is no exception to this as one of Indonesia's online news sites. Thanks to their narrative

news strategy, *Republika* has the most Muslim readers to date, which circulates the Muslim readership phenomenon in Indonesia (Tabroni et al., 2023). Muslims in young generations, such as young adults, are especially affected because young adults generally use more online media and are more proficient at using them.

News narration strategy aims to persuade their readers to access their information. All the content narratives allow the audience to process specific information from news media (Kristanti & Marta, 2021). This persuasive strategy is even more encouraged in digital media due to its tight competition not only from domestic news website, but also through international news sites. Circulating readership through narrated information allows news media to keep their readers as well as a chance to attract new readers. It will create a readership environment that builds not only the news site's credibility, but also the reader's loyalty to keep reading their contents (Sari et al., 2021).

Online media presents itself by providing various information such as daily issues, politics, sports, et cetera. The COVID-19 Pandemic era has also forced online media to distribute information regarding the pandemic's spread (Lumampauw et al., 2021). The virus' lethality and its capability to spread quickly have led the Indonesian government to release a regulation limiting their citizen's activities for three months, from 29th February to 29th May 2020. In addition, the government has another policy that requires Indonesians to limit themselves from direct physical contact and avoid all joint meetings while this regulation is active (Lestari et al., 2021; Marta, Syarnubi, et al., 2021). Limitations of social mobility have been one way to reduce the transmission of the virus. The survey by (Satgas COVID-19, 2022) also denotes that the Capital City

of Jakarta has the most COVID-19 spread in December 2020.

Despite all of the government's attempts to limit the spread of the virus, the government's countermeasures seem ineffective in the country from 2020 to 2021. Several factors created the drawbacks of the COVID-19 countermeasure, such as Indonesia's ignorance of the virus during the early phase. Those factors cause a surge of infections during early 2020, causing a massive collapse of the economy (Purba, 2020). Selviani (2022) proves that online media has become a top-of-the-mind choice for Indonesians during the pandemic. This has made online news media a top priority choice for Indonesia citizens when it comes to exploring the internet. Looking for information through digital media on the internet is a behavior that is often done by people today because of the availability of easy and fast access (Salim et al., 2021; Yenni et al., 2017).

COVID-19 news broadcasting is always present during pandemic times. Indonesian citizens are no exception to this exposure. The pandemic news continued to remind the audience that the virus is not a drill (Setiawan et al., 2021). Some of the news was found disturbing to the audience due to the communicator's negative perspective, such as infection and death statistics. This disturbance has led to an increase in anxiety levels within the community. IBC conducted a survey regarding this issue and the results implicate that the respondents were extremely anxious regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. Some turned paranoid about the virus (Nasrullah & Sulaiman, 2021). This phenomenon shows that COVID-19 news broadcasts have their own correlation to people's anxiety levels. One example is directed to young adults, who responded to most of the surveys. This condition has led to young adults being isolated for most

of the 2020 and 2021 periods, which causes psychological damage due to the lack of direct human interactions. This psychological condition could lead to more serious health complications if they are left without treatment (Mandal et al., 2021).

Anxiety creates impulsiveness in affected individuals. Agung (2021) denotes a significant healthcare product scarcity during the pandemic due to impulsive purchases caused by anxiety during the COVID-19 Pandemic. The mental health condition has become a trending phenomenon in the pandemic due to the abundance of digital information and the hardware supporting its distribution. Gecaite-Stonciene (2021) posits that anxiety is more prominent among citizens at a younger age who are more likely to be distressed during COVID-19 Pandemic. Nowadays, citizens of younger age have a different set of culture and impressions. It will reflect their behavior based on their access to information (Marta, Miletresia, et al., 2022). COVID-19 Pandemic is no exception to this behavioral change, as the virus' lethality can also affect the young generation's quality of life. A lack of digital literacy potentially builds their anxiety which causes impulsive actions toward recent trends (Noviadi Nugroho et al., 2018). Digital literacy is to be socialized to youngsters to mitigate anxiety buildups from information that tend to have negative trends, such as COVID-19 Pandemic.

According to the Association of Indonesian Internet Service Providers (AIISP), reading online news is the second most reason people use the Internet, with the first being visiting social media (Suryono et al., 2020). Furthermore, smartphone dominates the hardware used to access the internet which is labeled at 99,51% according to a survey that consists of 8510 respondents (Asosiasi Penyelenggara Jasa Internet Indonesia,

2023). UC Browser also confirmed that 75.6% of smartphone users in Indonesia read more than three news articles daily. Internet has become the new media with the most usage throughout the ages, education and gender. The variety of internet users has led to a surge of differing perspectives towards the digital world (Marta, Fernando, et al., 2021). Education level can correlate to many things in technology, such as how individuals can perceive different things around them. Differentiation in education level can also affect the person regarding information filtering distributed through conventional and digital means, as well as how they respond to such information (Angreani et al., 2021). Education levels can be monitored through four phases: Elementary, Middle School, High School, and College level. Media Literacy would be important to all sections of the community. It allows them to understand how pieces of information are spread on the internet and how they should be selective to different sources (Santi Indra Astuti, 2017).

Based on the abovementioned issue, the researchers aim to identify how COVID-19 news broadcasting in *Republika.co.id* affects Jakarta young adults in terms of anxiety levels. The research is directed to review how far could COVID-19 news distributed in *Republika*, as an online media, poses a threat to the increase of anxiety levels among young adults in the Capital City of Jakarta. This is because online media can affect young adults' psychological state through receiving news statements (Jester & Kang, 2021).

The study uses two theories to identify the effect of COVID-19 news broadcasts to increase anxiety levels of Jakarta's young adults. The theories are the Cultivation Theory for the independent variable and the Individual Differences Theory of Mass Communication Effect

as a foundation of the dependent variable. We elaborate more on those in the following paragraphs.

Cultivation Theory explains how communications in media, whether conventional or digital, can implant a perspective to the audience. This theory provides four phases which are message (1), survey audience (2), and comparing the perspective between heavy viewers (3) and normal viewers (4) (Marta & Monica William, 2016). The Cultivation Theory predicts and/or explains how perspectives, ideologies, and perceptions towards different phenomena are distributed to the audience through media communication. This theory does not define the creation of perspective in a specific media communication but rather elaborates on the entirety of cultural media (Akbar et al., 2018).

Individual Differences Theory is defined as a different response by different individuals when presented with specific information. The effects of media communication play a factor in perceiving these responses and create a different ideology toward differing audiences (Xu & Cheng, 2021). This theory also explains how psychology and stimulation also affect individual responses regarding one information. All messages will provide the same stimulus for each audience, but it is up to the audience how they react to them. This theory explicitly assumes that there are psychological factors regarding media communication responses (Wirawan et al., 2021).

Based on the theoretical framework presented above, the author presents the research question and objective in the following sentences. The research question is based on how Indonesian muslim young adults' psychological state were affected by *Republika.co.id*'s news broadcasting as an online media source. The research objective is to identify how

significant the online news broadcasting by *Republika.co.id* affects Indonesian muslim young adults' anxiety levels.

The author has reviewed several studies done in the past related to anxiety levels by online media to identify the research gap. One study conducted by Nicomedes & Avila (2020) identified that COVID-19 pandemic consequences were the primary trigger of the surge of anxiety levels of the audience that read an online form related to it. This argument is supported by Bendau (2021), who mentioned that participants with past psychological fears will be more affected when they are exposed to COVID-19 pandemic news broadcasts.

Marzouki (2021) past research denotes that social media also affects psychological effects during the COVID-19 pandemic. Marzouki mentioned that the importance of social media use will assist in mitigating the anxiety level surge caused by online media. This discovery is supported by Ahmad's (2021) past research where most social media users in Malaysia were anxious about the COVID-19 pandemic. Had there been no counseling support by phone, this anxiety level could cause more serious damage to society.

A study by Caubergh (2021) notes that some adolescents used online media to cope with the psychical contact restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. That phenomenon is influenced by loneliness which can cause anxiety levels to increase. Online media can also be used to recover from such anxiety levels during the COVID-19 pandemic. Social media is the primary source of information regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. There are several interventions to social media usage since anxiety levels may increase due to overexposure to COVID-19 news by social media (Hou et al., 2020).

Based on the past research reviewed

above, the research gap lies that social media mostly sourced the majority of the COVID-19 pandemic news exposure. This research contributes to non social media sources in the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly the news web pages

METHOD

The study is quantitative research and uses a positivistic paradigm. This paradigm proves how reality is objectively identified through data (Hidayat et al., 2019). The research is directed to young adults who live in Jakarta and are between the age of 15-24 years old as the population, whereas the sample is identified by using simple random sampling (Stratton, 2021). The questionnaire is distributed as the research instrument to gather the research data among the samples. The research data collection consists of primary and secondary data. The primary data is collected through a direct survey of young Muslim adults in Jakarta who are 15-24 years old. A questionnaire was used to collect the responses from 100 respondents. The secondary data consisted of internal and external data. Internal data were collected by other internal research data, whereas external data is collected from collective statistic organizations (Marta & Suryani, 2016). The data validation and reliability were tested in SPSS 25.0 using Bivariate Data Analysis and the Likert Scale. Data validity was checked through the $r_{count>t}$ table, and the reliability of data was checked with Cronbach Alpha (α) formula where $\alpha > 0.60$. The data then be analyzed using and Correlation Test and Coefficient Determination Test.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Through 100 respondents who filled out the questionnaires of the study, the researchers identified that most of

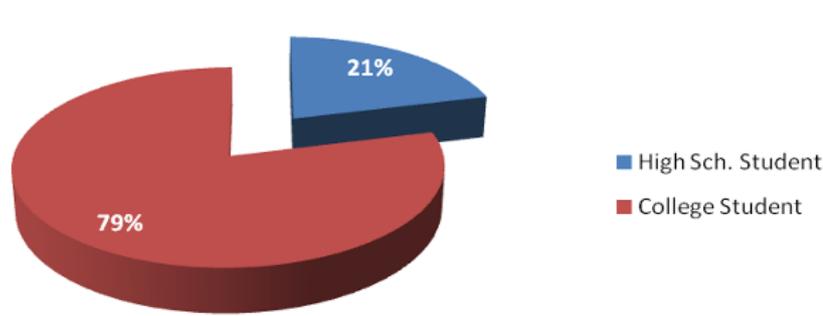


FIGURE 1. Respondents' Education Background (Source: Researcher's Data, 2021)

the respondents were at High School education level within a range of 79%, while the other 21% consisted of College or University students, as explained in the figure 1.

Those two types of research subjects (high school students and college students) also refer to research conducted by Ahmad & Amrin (2018), which shows that the use of online newspaper media has a positive contribution to motivation to study economics among Grade X IPA students at SMAN 1 Ende in Flores, as well as responding to research by Poluan et al., (2015) which emphasizes the effectiveness of using digital newspapers or online news among students, especially the communication science in Manado City, North Sulawesi Province.

In order to ensure the use of the instrument in the form of a research questionnaire to be declared valid before

being used on 100 respondents as research subjects, it is necessary to test the validity and reliability. The validity of the data is tested through r count where r count $>$ t table. Table 1 explains how to identify the validity of the research data.

Based on the table, it is identified that the independent variable, which is the COVID-19 news exposure by *Republika.co.id*, is confirmed to be valid using corrected total item correlation with the lowest score being $0.394 > 0.361$ and the highest score being $0.588 > 0.361$. Table 2 will test the validity of the dependent variable of the data.

Based on Table 2, it is identified that the dependent variable of the research data is valid, with the lowest score of $0.409 > 0.361$ and the highest value of $0.818 > 0.361$. Therefore, both research variables are confirmed valid, which opens an opportunity for reliability

TABLE 1. Validity Test of Independent Variable

Question	Pearson Correlation	R table	Validity
$X_1X_{1.1}$	0,503	0,361	Valid
$X_1X_{1.2}$	0,588	0,361	Valid
$X_1X_{1.3}$	0,571	0,361	Valid
$X_1X_{1.4}$	0,469	0,361	Valid
$X_1X_{1.5}$	0,496	0,361	Valid
$X_1X_{1.6}$	0,526	0,361	Valid
$X_1X_{1.7}$	0,394	0,361	Valid
$X_1X_{1.8}$	0,432	0,361	Valid
$X_1X_{1.9}$	0,487	0,361	Valid

TABLE 2. Validity Test of Dependent Variable

Question	PearsonCorrelation	R table	Validity
Y.1	0,693	0,361	Valid
Y.2	0,454	0,361	Valid
Y.3	0,484	0,361	Valid
Y.4	0,477	0,361	Valid
Y.5	0,812	0,361	Valid
Y.6	0,721	0,361	Valid
Y.7	0,743	0,361	Valid
Y.8	0,818	0,361	Valid
Y.9	0,702	0,361	Valid
Y.10	0,601	0,361	Valid
Y.11	0,718	0,361	Valid
Y.12	0,614	0,361	Valid
Y.13	0,743	0,361	Valid
Y.14	0,670	0,361	Valid
Y.15	0,584	0,361	Valid
Y.16	0,738	0,361	Valid
Y.17	0,409	0,361	Valid
Y.18	0,658	0,361	Valid

tests, explained in the following table. The reliability of data is tested through Cronbach Alpha where $\alpha > 0.6$.

Based on Table 3, it is confirmed that the independent variable's data is reliable, with a score of $0.62 > 0.6$. The dependent variable data is also reliable, with a score of $0.667 > 0.6$. Therefore, the independent variable, the COVID-19 news exposure by *Republika.co.id*, can be tested towards the dependent variable, the anxiety level of Jakarta's young adults. These two variables deepen research conducted by Susanto (2021), which saw a correlation between the length of time receiving online media exposure

of less than one hour or 60 minutes by 77.3% and the level of public knowledge about COVID-19. The first test will be conducted using the Partial Correlation Test, which the result is displayed in the following table 4.

Based on Table 4, it is discovered that there was a significant effect of COVID-19 news exposure on Anxiety levels. It is due to the Sig score (2-tailed) being positioned at 0.000 where $\text{Sig} < 0.05$. There is also a positive correlation between news exposure towards anxiety levels, which means COVID-19 news exposure by *Republika.co.id* will affect the increase of anxiety levels of Jakarta's

TABLE 3. Reliability Test

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha (X)	N of Items
0,620	9
Cronbach's Alpha (Y)	N of Items
0,667	18

TABLE 4. Partial Correlation Test

		Correlations	
		Media Exposure	Anxiety Level
Media Exposure	Pearson Correlation	1	,486**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,000
	N	100	100
Anxiety Level	Pearson Correlation	,486**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	
	N	100	100

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

young adults. The correlation test scored 0.486 indicating at a moderate level with a correlation score of around 0.4 to 0.599.

Research on exposure from *Republika.co.id* news is in line with previous research which looked at the media's framing of an issue during the COVID-19 Pandemic, such as research conducted by Angreani (2021), Aladdin et al., (2020), Arifin et al., (2020) and Marta et al., (2020). The use of *Republika* as a news source under study is very different from research conducted on a similar issue in the form of COVID-19 in other media, such as *Kompas.com* conducted by Pangestu and Isnaini (2022) to student audiences as respondents.

Table 5 tests the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable with the Coefficient Determination Test.

Table 5 shows that the coefficient determination score is positioned at 0.236 with a formula of $KD = R^2 \times 100\%$. It means that the COVID-19 news exposure affects increased anxiety levels by 23,6%, whereas the other 76,4% is caused by

other factors that were not relevant to the topic.

Many studies have been conducted to see that anxiety among young adults is caused by social media use but not specifically caused by news about death. As observed by Hidayati et al., (2022), research mapping in various main media indexing scientific journal article publications at the global level specifically looks at the psychosocial impact in the form of adolescent anxiety during the COVID-19 pandemic. In the early days of the pandemic, Fitria & Ifdil (2020) also found that 54% of teenagers experienced anxiety.

The study results indicate significant changes in anxiety when young adults receive information online, especially when they are proficient enough to explore many online media providers (Fauzi & Fasta, 2020). The past study further supports this statement by noting that young Muslim adults, who are the future portrait of the Indonesian Muslim community, must have digital literacy to prevent overthinking about issues that

TABLE 5. Coefficient Determination Test

Model Summary ^b				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	,486a	,236	,228	8,435

a. Predictors: (Constant), TOTAL_X1
b. Dependent Variable: TOTAL_Y

are not present yet. The phenomenon of anxiety build-ups is correlated with the Cultivation Theory that predicts a behavioral change in young generations thanks to exposure to COVID-19 Pandemic news on the internet. The narrative contents of online information create a new perspective for adolescents that COVID-19 is to be avoided at all costs, and they are more nervous whenever they are exposed to information that leads to a negative environment (Fadilla & Sukmono, 2021). One such case is the COVID-19 pandemic, where young adults are extremely anxious whenever COVID-19 articles are shared on online media. (Nicomedes & Avila, 2020) noted that anxiety can cause the immune system to be unstable and increases the individual's chances of being infected by a coronavirus. It portrays how urgent digital literacy in Indonesia is for the people.

Anxiety buildups through online information supports the theory of Individual Differences of Mass Communication Effect as different teenagers would respond similarly to COVID-19 Pandemic, even though they are reading different types of content spread in online news or social media. Their initial anxiety will cause impulsive actions, which would cause partial damage to the country's infrastructure (Ran et al., 2022). Therefore, online news websites are to consider what type of narratives they are going to publish in the digital world, as its contents can increase the reader's anxiety levels. As for the readers, they are to maintain their composure for online news exposure, as overthinking about the pandemic would increase their nervousness through social mobility (Yelin et al., 2020).

CONCLUSION

Based on the research background, data, and analysis, it is implied that there

are correlations between COVID-19 news exposure by *Republika.co.id* towards the increase in anxiety levels of Jakarta's young adults aged 15-24 years. News exposure affects anxiety levels by 23.6%, which is a significant factor. The other 76,4% were caused by other factors excluded from this research's topic. The research notes that website pages can also inflict anxiety levels on Muslim young adults regarding the COVID-19 pandemic.

There are limitations to this study. One of them is the narrow scope of the study which is limited to *Republika.co.id* website pages only. Future research should consider studying other website pages regarding COVID-19 and its correlation to anxiety levels in young adults. Another limitation is the strict sample group of one religion, which the author recommends broadening the scope by other religion groups as a sample or using other grouping measures in future studies.

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