

University Student's Tendency of Social Stigma Towards Coronavirus Disease in Digital Society (Indonesia and Japan)

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Abstract

This research compares the level of media literacy, social stigma, and the correlation between media literacy and social stigma in Indonesia and Japan, in order to know the right measures to eliminate the social stigma, as one of the inequality that occurred in the pandemic. The research question proposed in this study include: 1) Media literacy correlation with social stigma towards the infected person, 2) The severity of social stigma towards the infected person, and 3) How to solve the social stigma caused by social media in times of the current digital society. In the era of pandemic, people are not only fear the disease, but also the social stigma it brings. With that in mind, we would like to see whether or not the media literacy have any significance towards the occurrence of the social stigma. In this research, we found that people with low media literacy have a bigger chance to have a high social stigma towards the person with COVID-19. The result of this research could also be implemented in the government policy making to prevent the ostracization of a certain group related to COVID-19.

Keywords

COVID-19, Digital Society, Media Literacy, Social Stigma, University Student

1. Introduction

In the early 2020, the world was shocked by the spread of a disease caused by a virus known as COVID-19, which is a disease caused by a corona virus that infects the respiratory system and causing respiratory failure (Abdilah 2020). COVID-19 is a new virus that is related to the SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) virus and several types of viruses that cause the common flu (WHO 2020). Furthermore, the spreading of hoax in social media caused the rise of anxiety in the society that fuelled discrimination and attacks against vulnerable people with COVID-19, which identified through the public health activity of contact tracing and ended up being blamed and compared to criminals by the other civilians (Balfadal and Santoso 2021; Sotgiu and Dobler 2020). Yet, the people with greater income, education, social support, and good mental health have been shown to be less worried and be less likely to stigmatize

other people, because they have more knowledge about the right information of the disease (Sotgiu and Dobler 2020). Therefore, in this research we would like to see whether the media literacy have any correlation towards the social stigma in terms of COVID-19, which included in one of 17 targets of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by the United Nations (UNDP n.d.). It is stated in the goal 10 (reduced inequalities) that by 2030, there is a need to empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status (UNDP n.d.).

1.1 Objectives

There are several objectives proposed in this research: 1. To examine the correlation between media literacy and social stigma towards the infected person, 2. To distinguish the severity of social stigma towards the infected person, and 3. To identify how to solve the social stigma caused by social media in times of the current digital society.

2. Literature Review

Social Stigma

According to UNICEF, Social stigma regarding the health issue is the negative association between a person or group of people who share a certain disease, including labeling, stereotyping, and discriminating act because of a perceived link with a disease (UNICEF 2020). In times of COVID-19 pandemic, the victim of social stigma varies from those who have recovered from the disease, those who are currently undergoing treatment, and the frontline workers of medical officers such as doctors, nurses, and even the police. Social stigma could negatively affect the efforts to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and bring low compliance in the prevention behavior that lead another challenge to overcome the pandemic (Putri and Priyono 2021; Rimawati and Handayani 2021).

There are three main factors in the occurrence of social stigma regarding COVID-19, which is the unfamiliarity of the new disease, the fear it brought; and the association of that fear with many other things, like the feeling of unsecured, the worry of responsibility, administrative destruction, and lack of trust in treatment (Putri and Priyono 2021; UNICEF 2020). There are three general categorization of stigma as stated by Erving Goffman in the Social Stigma Theory, which is physical health ailments, affiliations with marginalized groups, and factors attributed to one's 'moral' character or behaviors (Turan et al 2019).

Media Literacy

According to Potter, media literacy is an exposure to media from which we interpret the meaning of every message we come across on it (Tetep and Suparman 2019). It is the ability to understand the main component of the media's article, the ability to access and utilize the media, and the ability to communicate through the media (soumu.go.jp n.d.). In the framing theory, Erving Goffman stated that communication source showing and characterizing an issue and mainly applied to determine how media reshape the information and therefore transforms the responses of people to an overall scope of external stimulation by which individuals develop a specific interpretation of an issue (Memon et al 2019). Since the pandemic began, there has been an increase in social media usage where people started gathering information from there and believing them without first confirming the reliability of the information (Anwar et al 2020). In Indonesia, people mostly used television (47%), followed with social media (22.4%) and government's official site (17.9%) as the trusted media to gain information about what happens worldwide (Pahlevi 2022). On the other hand, most of Japanese people used television (43.7%), followed with newspaper (34.6%) and streaming news online (29.1%) as the trusted media to gain information about what happens worldwide (Kitaguchi 2021). While it is true that most people generally used television, there are also many people who used internet as a means to collect information, which means that the usage of media is divided depends on the reason (soumu.go.jp 2021).

This research examines the correlation between the occurrence of social stigma towards COVID-19 and the level of media literacy in university environment, thus making it different from the research in the past which only studied the social stigma in the pandemic, without making a connection with the media literacy.

3. Methods

This research are conducted using descriptive method with university students from Indonesia and Japan as a target participant, thus comparing the result of the two countries. Descriptive method is usually used to describe the characteristics of a phenomenon, situation or population (Harappa Education n.d.).

4. Data Collection

Furthermore, the data collection emphasizes of questionnaire and literature review, in order to explain the results of survey and the measures from Indonesia and Japan to eliminate social stigma. The target participant are then gathered using convenience sampling, where the researcher announces the study and participants self-select if they wish to participate (Cambridge.org 2021).

5. Results and Discussion

The first survey consists of 5 questions in order to see the degree of media literacy in every respondents, from low (0-3 points), pretty low (4-7 points), pretty high (8-11 points), to high (12-15 points) media literacy. The second survey consists of 5 questions in order to see the degree of social stigma in every respondents, from almost non-existent (0-3 points), low (4-7 points), medium (8-11 points), to high (12-15 points) social stigma. The third survey consist of 3 questions in order to see what the respondents think about the existence of social stigma itself. The surveys are made using google form and spreaded to 32 university students from Indonesia and Japan.

The first and second survey consist of closed-ended questions (likert scale), with options from strongly agree (3 point), agree (2 point), disagree (1 point), to strongly disagree (0 point), which are analyzed by summing up the points of each questions and categorizing them in each groups, to determine the degree of media literacy and social stigma. From there, the difference between the two countries and the correlation between media literacy and social stigma could be discerned. The third survey are the combination of open-ended question and closed-ended questions (likert scale), which are analyzed by seeing the percentage of each options chosen by every respondents. The majority of the chosen options are then used to determine the result of survey. (Figure 1)

5.1 Graphical Results

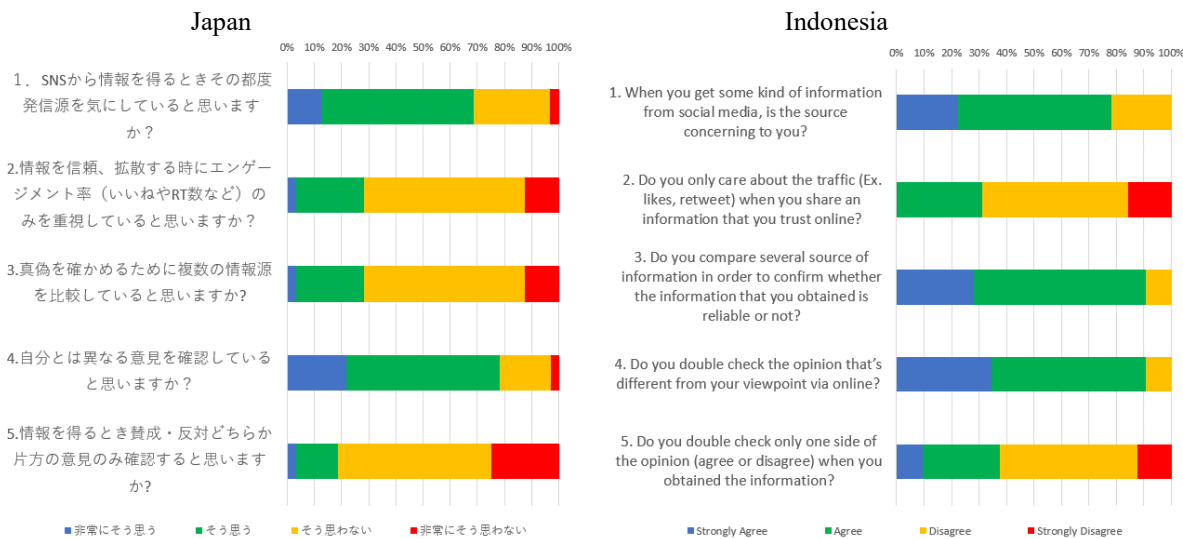


Figure 1. Media Literacy Survey Result

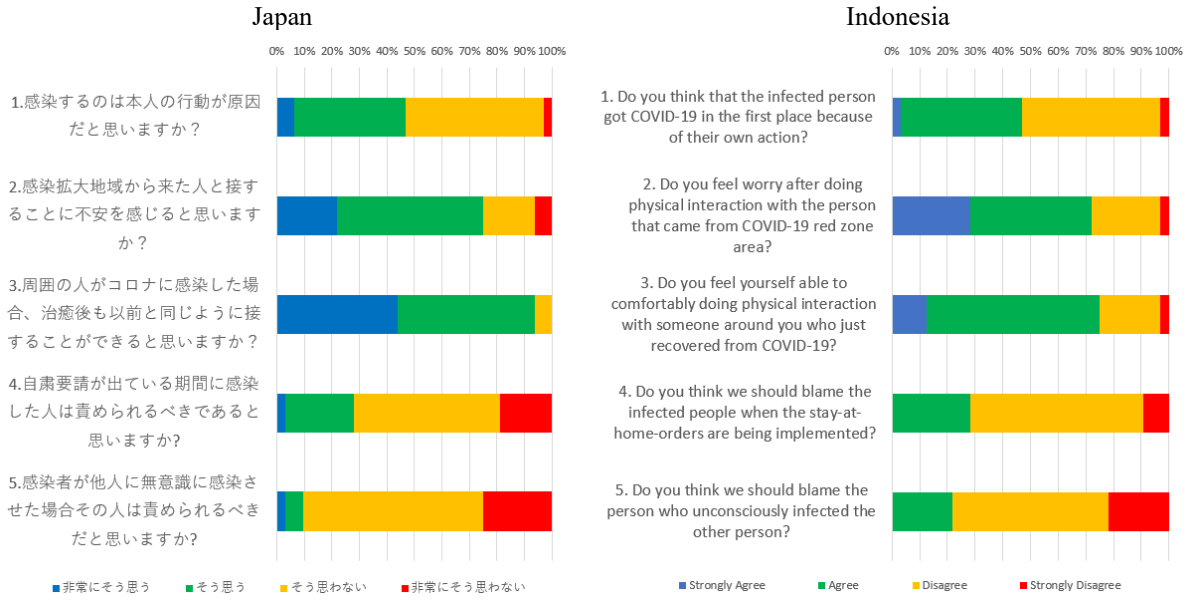


Figure 2. Social Stigma Survey Result

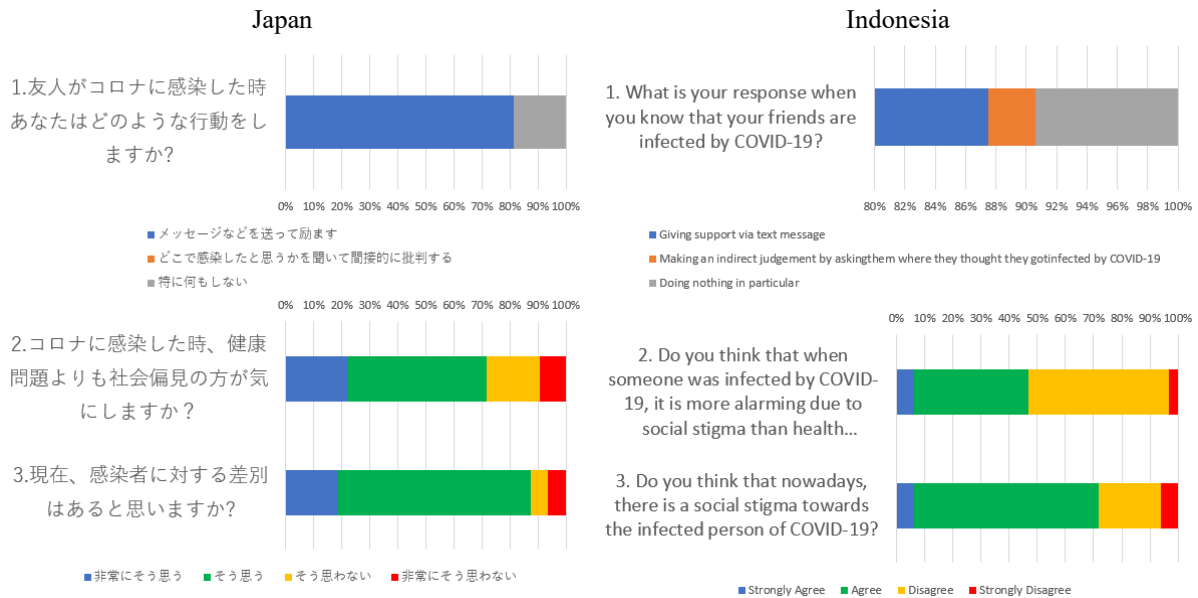


Figure 3. Social Stigma Concerns Survey Result

Indonesia

From the first survey, it could be seen that most of the respondents have a pretty high media literacy (23 respondents), some have a high media literacy (7 respondents), and the rest of them have a pretty low media literacy (2 respondents). From the second survey, it could be seen that most of the respondents have a low level of social stigma (21 respondents), some have a medium level of social stigma (10 respondents), and the rest of them have a high level of social stigma (1 respondent). From those information, it could be surmised that all of the respondents from Indonesia with pretty low media literacy have a low level of social stigma (2 out of 2 respondents), 70% of the respondents from Indonesia with pretty high media literacy have a low level of social stigma (16 out of 23 respondents), and 43% of the respondent from Indonesia with high media literacy have a low level of social stigma (3 out of 7 respondents).

Therefore, the respondents with low media literacy have more tendencies to have a social stigma. From the third survey, it could be seen that most of the respondents would give their support to the other person that got infected by COVID-19. Although most of the respondents don't think that social stigma is more alarming than the health concerns in regards to COVID-19 pandemic, they do recognize the fact that there is a social stigma towards the infected person.

Japan

From the first survey, it could be seen that most of the respondents have a pretty high media literacy (23 respondents), some have a high media literacy (5 respondents), and the rest of them have a pretty low media literacy (4 respondents). From the second survey, it could be seen that most of the respondents have a low level of social stigma (21 respondents), some have a medium level of social stigma (7 respondents), and the rest of them have an almost non-existent social stigma (4 respondents). From those information, it could be surmised that 75% of the respondents from Japan with pretty low media literacy have a medium level of social stigma (3 out of 4 respondents), 74% of the respondents from Japan with pretty high media literacy have a low level of social stigma (17 out of 23 respondents), and 60% of the respondents from Japan with high media literacy have a low level of social stigma (3 out of 5 respondents). Therefore, the respondents with low media literacy have more tendencies to have a social stigma. From the third survey, it could be seen that most of the respondents would give their support to the other person that got infected by COVID-19. They also think that social stigma is more alarming than the health concerns in regards to COVID-19 pandemic and recognize the fact that there is a social stigma towards the infected person.

The majority of respondents from Indonesia and Japan are supportive toward the infected person and acknowledge that there is social stigma circulated among the infected. To some extent, they tend to be more concerned about the existence of social stigma than the health problems itself. Low levels of media literacy are one of the main reasons why misinformation continues to spread on social media. People with little knowledge of COVID-19 tend to have a higher social stigma of the infected as they are more likely to believe false information shared on social media (Rahman et al 2021). However, knowing a lot about COVID-19 does not necessarily mean that the social stigma to the infected person is low (Rahman et al 2021).

There are several measure that could be done to eliminate the social stigma. In Indonesia, the government strongly suggested the people to share the accurate information that is considered as facts based only from the official source and to dispel the myth of COVID-19 (Dai 2020). In Japan, the government currently aims for the development and popularization of fact-check based from FIJ (Fact-check Initiative Japan), which is the organization that aiming for the popularization of fact-check (fij.info n.d.) They also implementing the fact-check regulation by newspaper or TV Station (the post from social media would be analyzed by many group, like Nihon Housou Kyoukai (NHK), SoLT (Social Listening Team), or even by individual that have the fact-check system, and then the reliable news would be used by the news production) (unesco.org 2021), and proceed with the further development activities by Ministry of Justice by putting the article about how to stop the occurrence of social stigma and also provide the right information and knowledge about COVID-19 (Kitaguchi 2021).

Not only that, there are some things that could be done individually to prevent the social stigma from dispersing, such as considering the different opinions, knowing one's bias (stigma), confirm whether the information is true or not, confirm the source of information and transmission while investigating the medium used to share the information, confirm the 5W1H of every information (Investigate whether the information is partial or not), knowing for sure whether the information is an advertisement, media coverage, or something else, investigate whether the information is tagged along with one's bias or assumption, and not going along with what the majority believe to be true before confirming the credibility of information (moj.go.jp 2021).

5.2 Proposed Improvements

Some of the questions used in the surveys are ambiguous as to whether or not they could represented the topic of study. Furthermore, the target participant used in this research are not wide enough, because with only university students as the respondents, the result is only limited to people with educational background. Therefore, this research could be improved by categorizing the list of questions in specific subthemes and widening the range of the target participants. For the future research, it would be the best to conduct a research on adults and elderly on the similar topic of study.

6. Conclusion

Even though the majority of university student from Indonesia & Japan have a high media literacy and the social stigma is not that high, the possibility of having a high social stigma among the people with low media literacy is considered high, so the measures to eliminate social stigma must be implemented thoroughly. Furthermore, the government must have a mutual interaction with the public in order to have a systematic communication that could prevent the misinformation regarding COVID-19, so that the people would have a right perception about what should be done for the disease prevention without causing the social stigma towards the victim / sufferer of COVID-19.

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Biography

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