

Between Harmless Gossiping and Harmful Politicking: Conspiracy Theories on Covid-19 in Indonesia

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Abstract: During the escalating Covid-19 pandemic, conspiracy theorists explaining that it is not a natural phenomenon but rather a human one created by some kind of evil international actor for political or economic gain--have caught the attention of social media users around the world and sparked controversy. Indonesia is no exception. Critical responses immediately emerged from the government, medical experts, and other community leaders, who considered it dangerous and detrimental to the community and hampered efforts to overcome the pandemic. However, this article argues that conspiracy theories intransitive arguments that pandemics can be engineered for political and economic purposes are not necessarily harmful. Such habits have their roots in primitive human culture: the animist instinct that some kind of creative agency must be behind complex phenomena such as the Covid-19 pandemic; and gossip about the faults of others. Understanding the difference between the gossiping and political side of conspiracy theories will help find appropriate and effective responses. This article uses the QCA method of seven viral content on Youtube.

1 INTRODUCTION

The Covid-19 pandemic has shocked the world. The outbreak, which began in the central Chinese city of Wuhan, has infected tens of thousands of people within weeks, with acute respiratory symptoms, and quickly claimed thousands of deaths. This virus has spread to various countries in less than a month, panicking everyone, including higher medical countries such as the United States. The first recommendation issued by the World Health Organization (WHO) is a lockdown for all activities outside the home. It did not take long to paralyze the business world and make the political situation unstable (worldbank.org, 2020). The rapid spread of the infection without precedent, while the slow response from health authorities both nationally and internationally, due to a lack of adequate data, has led the public mainly through social media to seek alternative information about what happened. As official information arrives very slowly and is often incomplete, raising more questions than answers, more speculative and ultimately conspiratorial information comes to the fore. Present in various versions, this narrative contains a typical speculative-political argument that this seemingly complex and

systematic event could not have occurred naturally (Uscinski, et al., 2020).

In the US, the first conspiracy theories related to Covid-19 carried the name of Judy Mikovits, a virologist who posted a video on YouTube entitled "Plandemic", in which he explained that Covid-19 was not a disaster but was planned by a global network of rogue agents that includes the WHO, US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and businesses like Bill Gates. Although YouTube later banned the video, arguments have spread. The pros and cons are unavoidable. Many think Mikovits is exacerbating the situation amid efforts to understand and control the outbreak. At the same time, others praised Mikovits as a hero who dared to speak the truth about corruption in the world of health (Kompas.com, 2020). Such conspiracy theories also spread quickly throughout the world, including in Indonesia. Amid public uncertainty and anxiety, conspiracy narratives with some sort of "inside information" easily attract attention and provoke pros and cons.

This article argues that conspiracy theories are not necessarily harmful because, in some ways, they are part of society's tradition, namely the animistic logic that there is always creativity. The power behind every event--including the Covid-19 pandemic, and

the habit of gossiping that finds fault with others or makes them scapegoats for whatever problem occurs. This article further argues that conspiracy theories will only be harmful if exploited for economic and political gain, leading to systematic and ongoing disinformation. This article examines seven videos on YouTube containing conspiracy theories related to Covid-19 that became popular in early 2020, featuring Siti Fadilah Supari, Yasonna Laoly, Irene Burhan, Tirta Mandira Hudi, Mardigu Wowiek Prasantyo, I Gede "Jerinx" Ari Astina, and Ichsanuddin Nursy. The extent to which conspiracy theory discourse about Covid-19 is harmful to the public. Therefore, this research adopts Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) to extract the content, context, and characteristics of conspiracy discourse in videos.

In addition, conspiracy theories are a complex phenomenon. Scholars from various disciplines have proposed different definitions that are not only numerous but also varied in content. Some definitions are general and abstract, defining conspiracy theories as discourses with three characteristics: that nothing happens by chance, that what happens is not as it seems, and that everything is always connected (Butter & Knight, 2020). More empirical definitions highlight certain aspects of the phenomenon. Some define a conspiracy theory as an alternative or informal version of information, as distinct from the public version of the government or academic community (Butter & Knight, 2020). There are those who emphasize elements of the ruling elite (Butter & Knight, 2020); for example, accusations that Western countries conspire to ban imports of wood products from Southeast Asia on the grounds of environmental issues are an excuse to protect wood products from Western countries of competitive new entrants. Others see more of the threat of conspiracy theories, such as the notion that vaccines are a nefarious attempt by international pharmaceutical businesses (the largest after the oil and arms network) to spread disease and then sell the antidote (Butter & Knight, 2020). Finally, several definitions break down the structure of conspiracy theories by distinguishing conspiracy theories as a discourse, beliefs, and (Butter & Knight, 2020).

The definition is becoming increasingly complex in the hands of scholars from various disciplines. For example, in psychology, psychologists tended to associate the spread and adoption of conspiracy theories with symptoms of mental illness, anxiety and distress (Georgiou, Delfabbro, & Balzan, 2020).

The idea that conspiracy theories are related to the problem of psychological illness has been challenged

by sociologists. They suggest that it is not due to psychological defects but rather due to broader social factors. Several sociological studies have found that conspiracy theories are more likely to be popular among low-educated groups unfamiliar with analytical thinking and less popular among highly educated groups or those familiar with critical and analytical (Georgiou, Delfabbro, & Balzan, 2020). Others show that conspiracy theories are also widely accepted among marginalized groups. Those most vocal in promoting conspiracy theories tend to have higher alienation, exclusion, or social isolation rates. Researchers explain that alienation from social norms will lead people to conspiratorial ways of thinking for several reasons: first, rejecting normative and typical explanations to reject source legitimacy; second, they may be forced to support other conspirators' groups to seek support; third, marginalized groups can justify their situation by popularizing conspiracy theories to create the impression that they are victims and not perpetrators of their situation; Finally, the oppressed will also get the meaning of conspiracy theories which imply that society has lost its morals (Moulding, et al., 2016). Research findings in political science also challenge conspiracy theories' associations with mental illness. Several studies have shown that acceptance of conspiracy theories is an extreme ideological mechanism for a group to overcome emerging political and economic problems by simplifying the problem by finding scapegoats to blame (Wlezien & Soroka, 2016a). Other research shows that the application of conspiracy theories shows a cynical attitude towards political reality or ruling groups with either anarchic, apathetic, or democratic tendencies. Finally, conspiracy theories are also related to popular political tendencies, namely the efforts of political elites to garner public support by simplifying the situation into conflicts between good people and bad people while placing themselves in first person champions (Douglas, et al., 2019).

In contrast to the three previous approaches, which tend to regard conspiracy theories as a problem that needs serious attention, Anthropological studies offer a different explanation by emphasizing the reasonableness of the phenomenon. It is said that conspiracy theories are part of the daily activities of modern society and have long roots in the history of human civilization: namely animistic reasoning and the habit of gossiping. Although modern scientific education has abolished animism as a belief system about invisible creative agents behind natural phenomena such as the sun, moon, stars, wind, disasters, and others. However, the animistic

reasoning that there must be someone or something creatively responsible for a complex problem like a pandemic is still a common heuristic in everyday life. While gossiping is the habit of turning every stone to look for the ugliness and faults of others and make them scapegoats for every problem they face. Gossip is a psychological mechanism for people to feel okay by talking bad about others (Andrade, 2020).

From the literature reviewed in the previous paragraphs, there are four points related to conspiracy theories: First, conspiracy theories are different from hoaxes or fake news. Conspiracy theories about Covid-19 do not deny that many Covid-19s are real but emphasize that it is not something natural but instead deliberately engineered by certain groups for political and economic gain at the expense of the common people. Second, there are two distinct ways people believe and promote conspiracy theories: those with good intentions to uncover scandals that harm the public and those who seek personal or group gain by fishing in murky waters. Third, anthropologically, conspiracy theories are part of everyday mundane activities and are rooted in animistic thinking and gossip habits. Fourth, certain psychological, sociological, and political conditions can increase the acceptance of conspiracy theories and exacerbate the negative effects of these conditions.

This article examines the phenomenon of conspiracy theories related to Covid-19 in Indonesia. Data were taken from social media and other online sources. The main sources are 7 YouTube videos discussing conspiracy theories about the Covid-19 phenomenon, featuring: (i) Siti Fadilah Supari, former Indonesian Minister of Health 2004-2009 (Corbuzier, 2020b); (ii) Yasonna Laoly, Minister of Law and Human Rights and top official from the ruling party (Corbuzier, 2020c); (iii) Erlina Burhan, a pulmonologist who works in a government program to research and deal with the Covid-19 pandemic (Corbuzier, 2020f); (iv) Tirta Mandira Hudi, an entrepreneur and social activist, a doctor with training, who became a favorite media for his major efforts to mobilize public awareness of the deadly dangers of the Covid-19 pandemic (Corbuzier, 2020g); (v) Wowiek Mardigu "Bossman Sontoloyo" Prasatyanto, a businessman and former intelligence expert (Corbuzier, 2020) (vi) I Gede Ari Astina alias "Jerinx", a Balinese musician from the indie band Superman is Dead (KompasTV, 2020b); and (vii) Ichsanuddin Noorsy, an economist known for his criticism of government policies (tvOneNews, 2020); (Yahya, 2020a). The seven videos were chosen because of their popularity and became a source of

controversy regarding Covid-19. In addition, the resource persons featured in the videos also represent different positions related to the pandemic and how society reacts to it.

This paper follows a QCA approach. It is a method used to explore the meaning in a text about the context in which it is used. Content analysis is a research method that offers a systematic and objective way to obtain conclusions/inferences from verbal, visual, and written data to describe and identify certain phenomena (Bengtsson, 2016). Content Analysis has a long history and has been used since the 18th century in Europe among biblical scholars and historians (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005); (Bengtsson, 2016). Besides content analysis, there are at least five other approaches to examine textual phenomena. First, Objective Hermeneutics was developed by the German sociologist Klaus Oevermann, a method for exploring and capturing the structure of social reality behind a text. Second, the famous Grounded theory by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss can also be applied to analyze textual data using inductive and deductive coding processes to build exploratory theoretical models. Third, Psychoanalytic Textual Interpretation focuses on exploring the inner structure of a text. Using logical analysis, looking for gaps, fragmentation, and consistency in the text to find the author's defense mechanism. Fourth, phenomenological analysis to explore the core content of a text through a bracketing process, putting brackets on non-core meaning units, to find the core, following the standard procedure of analysis in the philosophical tradition of phenomenology. Fifth, biographical analysis to explore and interpret data related to an individual's history or life journey, usually using a narrative structure to organize data that may not be structured in the text into a coherent life story (Mayring, 2014).

This study adopted QCA because it is non-intrusive and non-reactive, providing a basic understanding of how words and terms are used (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). QCA identifies certain terms or words to understand their contextual usage. This is not to explore the meaning of the word but rather about its use. Therefore, it not only calculates the frequency and percentage of words and terms but also includes latent content, i.e. the meaning of the implications of using words and terms (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). This procedure is carried out in three stages:

First, decontextualization, by examining the content and structure of the text being studied. In this study, each video was analyzed to find out what the researchers said about the conspiracy theory about the

Covid-19 phenomenon purely without going further into its context and meaning. Second, recontextualization, to find the relevant personal context of each speaker. The contextual situation and conditions of each speaker that are relevant to the Covid-19 discourse will be explored to find personal situations to understand the speaker's profile and what is being discussed. Third, categorization, to formulate conceptual inferences on statements about whether conspiracy theories are harmful to public discourse (Bengtsson, 2016).

2 RESULT: VARIETIES OF CONSPIRATORY NARRATIVES ON COVID-19

2.1 Decontextualization: What Did They Say

This study found that, in general, all the resource persons shown in the video believed that Covid-19 was a real phenomenon, actually happened and not just fake news created by the media. So that in this context, all speakers can distinguish between conspiracy theories and hoaxes.

Furthermore, they also understand that the Covid-19 outbreak is a new and very complex phenomenon, many of which are still unknown, both related to the development of the virus, symptoms of the disease suffered by patients, treatment and care of people infected with the virus, as well as the non-medical implications of the outbreak such as on economic, social and political conditions in society.

Yasonna Laoly, for example, admitted that the Covid-19 outbreak could be the result of engineering by certain groups for political or economic gain. As a politician, he admits that politics is full of fabrication and intrigue, where political actors often justify any means to pursue their interests. But he also underlined that we could not confirm this until there is concrete evidence. Likewise, Irene Burhan can accept the possibility that the Covid-19 pandemic was deliberately engineered because there is still no unanimous agreement regarding the explanation of the origin of the spread of Corona in Wuhan, China, so that this epidemic can still be engineered. Tirta Mandira Hudi gave a slightly different statement. On the other hand, like the two previous sources, Tirta officially acknowledged that there was a possibility that the Covid-19 outbreak was a man-made pandemic. However, we cannot move beyond

speculative possibility until empirical evidence is found to support it.

At this point, it is clear that the three speakers are carefully refraining from going any further than formal and speculative acknowledgments of the possibility of the Covid-19 outbreak as a man-made pandemic. They regard this possibility as a hypothesis statement that can only be confirmed after there is evidence. While the next four speakers were more confirmatory, stating that the engineering of the Covid-19 pandemic was a fact. However, they do not support claims with empirical data or findings. On syllogistic logic regarding the phenomenon of commercialization and politicization of the Covid-19 pandemic: politicians and business people are always looking for ways to profit by any means, Covid-19 vaccines are produced commercially with huge profits. Consequently, Covid-19 is part of a political and economic project for profit.

For example, Siti Fadhilah Supari (SFS) stated that pandemics are not a natural thing but part of the engineering of business politics and international politics. She relied on her experience as the Ministry of Health, who handled the bird flu outbreak in 2005. She was controversial with the WHO for refusing to submit virus samples to produce vaccines because the vaccine production program only benefits developed countries. Mardigu also believes that the Covid 19 outbreak is the result of engineering by certain groups. If Siti considers the Covid-19 outbreak to be the result of international political engineering, Mardigu uses the narrative of US political-economic competition between globalist groups vs. nationalist groups as a reference. For him, the election of Donald J. Trump as president has opened the door to the domination of nationalist groups who prioritize US economic interests, which lead to a trade war with China. This is detrimental to the interests of globalist groups whose businesses do not have a national identity. I Gede "Jerinx" Ari Astina, in a video interview with Aiman from Kompas TV, stated that the Covid-19 outbreak is part of a big scenario of international interest. Jerinx said that he sourced information from online sources while citing the name of a certain Kaufmann doctor as a reference (Dr Andrew Kaufmann, a psychiatrist from New York America who is famous for declaring Covid-19 a hoax). Jerinx also emphasized that these international political interests have tremendous power to control the mainstream media, which sometimes contradict each other, giving the impression that the public has a choice of sources of information, when in fact, they do not. He added that there was information that doctors in America were paid to produce a higher Covid-19 death rate, which

caused public fear. He also questioned why Indonesian doctors are afraid of WHO, even though in other parts of the world doctors and scientists have different opinions about Covid-19.

Lastly, Ichsanuddin Noorsy stated that Covid-19 is unnatural (sometimes said to be unreal) and part of international business competition. He specifically mentioned the cryptocurrency business scenario competition involving big parties such as Bill Gates, Mark Zuckerberg, Russia, and China. He also cites internet news about Bill Gates, who has designed bio-information technology through his Microsoft, which collects personal data by inserting a chip into the human body.

2.2 Recontextualization: Relevant Situation behind the Statement

Recontextualization is a Qualitative Content Analysis procedure that finds situations outside the data (i.e. the video being studied) relevant to understanding the broader meaning of the spoken statement. More specifically, the context in question is the life situation of each speaker, both in the past and present, which is relevant to their statement about the Covid-19 conspiracy theory. In this way, statements that look similar may have very different meanings.

Yasonna is a representative of the government and the ruling party. He appears in the video in his private rather than official capacity, although he does speak at length about his policies as a government minister. The same thing happened to Irene Burhan, who was introduced in the video as a government employee and senior pulmonologist involved in research and handling the Covid-19 outbreak. There is also no information linking Irene Burhan to the discourse of conspiracy theories about Covid-19 other than in this video. Tirta Mandira Hudi has a similar situation, although not the same because he is a private person and not a government employee. In the early days of the pandemic, Tirta was very active in campaigning for emergency aid to prevent and control viral infections. Through his social media accounts, he raises funds to buy masks and distribute them to medical personnel in the field, especially in areas directly facing the threat of the deadly virus. He also mobilized a coalition with fellow medical doctors to raise awareness about the importance of multi-sectoral participation in handling the coronavirus outbreak.

Moreover, of course, the most interesting case is Siti Fadilah Supari. In the medical history of Indonesia, his name is recorded as the minister who can handle bird flu outbreaks and was hailed as a hero, not only by Indonesia but also by many other

countries, for daring to boycott the WHO program to collect virus specimen samples for vaccine manufacturing programs. Siti considers the program only benefits the vaccine-producing rich countries, ignoring the sample-owner countries. Besides, there is no knowledge transfer, and small countries are only consumers (Supari, 2007); (Supari, 2008). This has become international coverage and has been the subject of analysis in several journal articles. Some criticize Siti's policies that hinder efforts to develop health services; others support it as Indonesia's right to protect the interests of its country regarding specimen samples as state assets if they do not provide benefits (Kamradt-Scott, 2020); (Lowe, 2019).

Mardigu Wowiek Prasetyanto also has an interesting case because he is present as an intelligence expert, or someone who knows the part of the story, behind the scenes, or the unrevealed story of an incident. Like Jerinx, for the support and promotion of conspiracy narratives about Covid-19, Jerinx does not seem to have complicated arguments and relies more on other local and international conspiracy theories. It seems that what brought him to the media was his uncompromising attitude in pushing Covid-19 conspiracy theories and criticizing the government, which ultimately sent him behind bars. The last one is Ichsanuddin Noorsy. Ichsanuddin does not seem to have a straightforward grand narrative, other than the classic argument that capitalism is an exploitative global political and economic network. He appears to have randomly chosen sources and perspectives, perhaps because of his undergraduate background, which combines law, politics, and economics. He was particularly interested in citing the argument that a Covid vaccine was engineered by Bill Gates for the cryptocurrency program, an argument similar to posts that went viral on internet forums, and not citing sources with scientific credibility.

At this point, it is interesting to note that, according to the research findings, what makes conspiracy theories so popular, so compelling, and seductive is that they contain the so-called "minimal counterintuitive effect," which is a slight twist to the story. Already popular ones: ideological conflicts, high-level political and business battles, etc., adding logical but unverified elements (Andrade, 2020).

2.3 Categorization: What Can We Infer

The contextual reading in the previous section allows us to get a more significant meaning from the statements in the video, for example, what benefit

each speaker gets from this conspiracy discourse. The study found that conspiracy narratives about Covid-19 fall into at least four categories.

First, the formalistic and casual neutral position recognizes the rationality of conspiracy logic about Covid-19 but does not believe it or regard it as anything specifically good or bad. This is the position of Yasonna and Irene. For them, the conspiracy discourse that Covid-19 might be engineered is quite reasonable because such realities: intrigue, scandal, sabotage are commonplace in politics. However, to confirm this, we need solid evidence. Statements like this are typical of casual gossip, time killers, which carry no pretense and tend to be attractive. Second, a formalistic casual neutral position recognizes the rationality of conspiracy narratives about Covid-19 without believing it but adds that to some extent, conspiracy theories have a positive value in increasing public critical awareness of the complicated political elements of the situation. From one side, this attitude reflects political pragmatism to use anything to achieve goals that are considered good or profitable.

On the other hand, this is a public education strategy to offer information that can stimulate the community to explore further and cross-check. Third, the position that believes in conspiracy narratives related to Covid-19 while at the same time taking credit from the discourse for personal gain. This happened to Siti Fadilah Supari, where she used a conspiracy narrative to support her argument that she was innocent and just a victim of policies she took against the interests of international powers. This will give a moral charge that he is not only a national hero but also a martyr. Finally, a position that believes in and supports conspiracy narratives but does not make narratives part of the core business. This happened to I Gede "Jerinx" Ari Astina, who never claimed to be an expert in related fields--health, politics, economics--and always referred to the arguments built by other parties.

3 DISCUSSION: BETWEEN GOSSIPING AND POLITICKING

It is undeniable that one of the biggest problems facing governments and other institutions in dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic is uncertainty. In such a situation, anything that adds to the uncertainty and confusion of conspiracy theories that rely mostly on unverified sources is negative or even dangerous.

So, conspiracy theories about Covid-19 are the least useful and the most dangerous. It is useless because it contains no substantive information other than a logical exercise. So, no matter how many versions of conspiracy theories people read or hear, it will not help them in their practical daily activities. They will continue to work at the same places, shop at the same places, and consume the same commodities as those who do not believe in conspiracy theories. That means it does not help at all. And, of course, believing and spreading conspiracy narratives regarding the Covid-19 outbreak would be dangerous if it involved seeking personal gain. Because it would be a public scam when someone tries to persuade the public with correct information while seeking personal gain behind their back. Like Siti Fadilah, when she was in prison, she criticized the government, but after her release, she quickly fell into the same group that she criticized.

Likewise, in Mardigu and Ichsanuddin cases, they made the conspiracy narrative related to the Covid-19 part of their business. If Siti's case is a fraud, in Mardigu and Ichsanuddin, it is systematic exploitation. Mardigu runs a Youtube channel that features a lot of content with an alternative perspective to typical intelligence leaks and has more than 1.4 million subscribers. Mardigu monetizes conspiracy discourse, including those related to Covid-19, and earns money. Meanwhile, Ichsanuddin gained additional popularity in conveying narrative conspiracy about Covid-19 in his expertise as an economic observer. Many videos and news on the internet display the narrative of the conspiracy, not only about Covid-19. A Google search with the query "Ichsanuddin Noorsy Covid-19" yielded 82,000 results in 0.58 seconds, double the results for Mardigu with the same keyword. With the logic of market law, as applied to the monetization of social media, the more popular the theme of conspiracy theories about Covid-19 on the internet, Mardigu and Ichsanuddin will also get a higher income. Of course, this is something that must be watched out for, because in the context of handling the Covid-19 pandemic, which is still messy in Indonesia, where there are still many people who refuse to follow medical advice, such as the use of masks and social distancing, strengthening the popularity of alternative discourses about the pandemic, although it does not deny reality will only add to the problem. Not to mention that if anti-government groups use this, it can become a counterproductive polemic. A strict ban on Covid-19 conspiracy theories can also be counterproductive.

Many people participate in this conspiracy discourse in a casual context, part of a habit of

gossiping or keeping the dialogue alive, as in the case of Yasonna Laoly and Irene. Burhan. The two agreed on the topic of conspiracy not because they believed it but as an attempt to lighten the mood. If they try to argue, they will spoil the chemistry of the situation, while the topic is just a trivial part of the dialogue. This is a common ethic among Indonesians to be tolerant of trivial things that they do not agree to maintain good relations or an atmosphere of dialogue and not to miss essential points in dialogue or conversation.

4 CONCLUSION

This article discusses the extent to which conspiracy theories about Covid-19 are harmful to the public. On the one hand, this question is essential because one of the main obstacles in dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic is uncertainty, both related to medical aspects and its broader social impact. On the other hand, conspiracy narratives that encourage the idea that humans intentionally created this pandemic for economic and political gain will complicate the situation.

The government tries to respond to this situation pragmatically by classifying it into misinformation and disinformation so that it needs to be removed from public discourse. This step, at first glance, seems to be in line with the findings of scientific studies related to conspiracy theories, which tend to see it as a result or symptom of a problem: psychological, social, economic, or political. However, a closer examination of the literature across disciplines – psychology, sociology, anthropology, politics, and economics – shows that conspiracy theories have some degree of acceptance. Some people support or approve of conspiracy theories even though they do not believe them; it is an informal response to keep the conversation warm or lively. In this context, anthropological studies confirm that conspiracy narratives are very close to two widespread habits of society, namely animistic reasoning as a heuristic, to conclude that there is always another side to reality and the habit of gossiping to look for the ugliness and faults of others. Then make them scapegoats for a problem. At this level, conspiracy narratives are harmless because they are spontaneous. Forbidding people to gossip will only create new problems.

On the other hand, some people believe in conspiracy theories and promote them with good intentions to help society uncover the scandals behind the pandemic. In this case, conspiracy theories have a negative side that can delegitimize strenuous efforts to overcome it, but also a positive side to raising

awareness that there are political dimensions that are most complex and dilemmatic, which are not only black and white, and that whatever the policy there will be those who disagree. Moreover, open dialogue in academic forums can help society to take advantage and eliminate excesses (Uscinski, 2020).

Meanwhile, some people are promoting Covid-19 conspiracy theories while gaining personal, financial or other benefits. Believe it or not, this group will benefit directly from the popularity of conspiracy theories. This group needs to be regulated so that the Covid-19 conspiracy theory does not spread out of control and become a commodity that can be instrumented for personal gain.

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