



ANTI-SCIENCE POLITICS AND THE LEADERSHIP CRISIS IN HANDLING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN INDONESIA

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ABSTRACT

Anti-science has become a socio-political phenomenon that spreads in various worlds. Politicians and citizens behave in refusing information from experts for various reasons. In the context of a pandemic, the government or citizens often show doubts and rejection of intellectuals about the Covid-19 virus. This article attempts to explain the anti-science attitude of the Indonesian government in handling the pandemic which has implications for the occurrence of a political leadership crisis. This research uses qualitative methods while collecting data through literature studies (secondary data) from various sources such as journals, books, online articles, and others. The results of the study reveal that the government's attitude that tends to be anti-science has led to the absence of the political decision-making process and the formulation of evidence-based policies. The implication is that the government is experiencing difficulties in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic and has a negative impact on people's lives at large. The pandemic outbreak has shown the government's stutter in managing the country and its citizens.

Keywords; anti-science, policy, pandemic, government.

A. INTRODUCTION

Scientific knowledge (science) often intersects with politics. The production of scientific knowledge is necessary for many actors and institutions to realize their interests. For example, governments need expert advice to formulate policies and manage citizens' lives. At the same time, politicians make science a festive instrument of power and strengthen influence. The implication is that there is a battle between the interests of various actors and institutions so that science becomes politicized (Barnes, 1997; Jasanoff, 2004). Public trust in science experiences very complex dynamics so that the truth of scientific information that has been tested by experts through a series of rigorous studies is often debated. Truth is relative because each person is based on his own logic of thinking regarding his view of the world. The effect is that someone

tends to doubt and reject science as information that is believed to be true, known as anti-science. Merkley (2020) defines anti-science as a general suspicion and distrust of intellectuals of any kind.

Anti-science has in fact become a phenomenon that has spread to various countries around the world. In America, for example, a movement against vaccination has emerged because people feel that vaccines have caused someone to become autistic. The expert consensus that global climate change is caused by human activities is also met with cynicism from most Americans. In Africa, hundreds of thousands of human lives have been lost due to the reluctance of local governments to provide drugs against the AIDS virus. This happens because the government tends to ignore the advice of medical experts regarding the virus which is known to be very deadly (Chigwedere et al., 2008). The anti-science phenomenon continues to grow in the post-truth era, an era where objective information has no influence in forming public opinion because it is defeated by a person's personal and emotional beliefs. Someone tends to reject scientific findings that are considered threatening and contrary to previous basic beliefs (Lewandowsky and Oberauer, 2016).

Anti-science attitudes not only plague ordinary citizens but also governments. This will certainly have a negative impact on the public interest because the government has the authority to make policies. The government's anti-science attitude has implications for poor quality public policies that can harm many people. As a formal institution, the government will be a reference for its citizens in their behavior. The government's anti-science attitude means that there are no policies that prioritize evidence-based policy principles. In fact, this principle is urgent, especially in facing critical situations, such as controlling the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak which is the world's biggest enemy today.

In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, most people initially doubted and did not believe how dangerous this deadly virus was. They ignore the advice of medical experts to implement strict health protocols and limit mobility. Not only that, while experts are working hard to develop a vaccine to create antibodies, the idea of vaccination itself is being doubted by the public. Tens of millions of Americans, for example, have organized an anti-vaccine rejection movement because they doubt the effectiveness of the vaccine. President Donald Trump has also demonstrated an anti-science stance. Since the virus was first discovered, Trump has tended to underestimate and ignore expert opinions. Trump once made a controversial

statement, advising Americans to drink bleach and household cleaners as products to ward off the virus. As a result, several people were rushed to hospital due to poisoning after following Trump's advice without scientific evidence.

Conditions in America are also found in other countries in the world, including Indonesia. At the start, some Indonesians still didn't believe in Covid-19 and even thought this virus was just a conspiracy. It turns out that the anti-science attitude of citizens regarding Covid-19 has not been followed by the government's efforts to present the best policies that can overcome the negative impacts caused by the pandemic. The government shows an anti-science attitude so that the management of handling Covid falls apart. The government's anti-science stance can be seen in the controversial statements of several ministers. Minister of Health Terawan Agus Putranto made a statement to the public that the Covid-19 virus would not enter Indonesia because residents were immune thanks to the help of prayer.

Terawan also challenged health experts from Harvard who stated that Indonesia could not possibly be free of the Covid-19 virus due to the government's inability to detect the virus. Coordinating Minister for Maritime Affairs and Investment, Luhut Binsar Panjaitan, said that Indonesian citizens are immune to Covid because it is not suitable for Indonesia's weather conditions so the virus will not develop well. Luhut's statement was opposed by intellectual circles because the statement was not based on scientific evidence. The Minister of Forestry, Syahrul Yasin Limpo, has received attention for producing necklaces made from eucalyptus which he claims are anti-coronavirus necklaces. In fact, there has been no scientific study regarding the necklace, and several experts even criticized Syahrul because at that time there had been no findings anywhere in the world that were able to ward off the virus.

The government's anti-science attitude in responding to the pandemic has resulted in the absence of policies for handling Covid-19 that prioritize evidence-based policies. As a result, the government stuttered while the spread of the virus was never able to be controlled. Not only has it hit people's health, but the pandemic has also paralyzed the economy. In mid-2020, Indonesia's poverty rate crept up to 9.78 percent compared to the previous year's 9.41 percent (Elena, 2020). The unemployment rate has also increased along with the implementation of policies limiting human activity and mobility to minimize the spread of the virus. In the August 2020 period, the number of unemployed people was 9.77 million, an increase of 2.67 million from the previous year (Idris, 2020).

In a crisis like this, the government has difficulty finding a way out of the recession. The government's anti-science stance contributes to exacerbating this situation. Government policies tend to be inconsistent and ineffective. For example, social restriction policies change without clear standards. The government's sense of crisis is not visible at a time when the public expects more firm and accountable government intervention in responding to the socio-economic impact of the pandemic. There is a shortage of masks at very expensive prices (Nafiah, 2020), hospitals can no longer accommodate patients exposed to Covid (Hastuti, 2020), waves of job layoffs by companies are happening everywhere, the economy continues to weaken (Merdeka, 2020) is a portrait of incompetence government in dealing with the pandemic because of anti-science attitudes that tend to trivialize covid.

This article attempts to portray the government's tendency to show an anti-science attitude in handling the pandemic and its implications for government governance. The argument that will be demonstrated in this article is that the government's anti-science attitude has resulted in the absence of policies that prioritize the principles of evidence-based policy. As a result, the government is experiencing difficulties in dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic and it is having a negative impact on the lives of citizens at large. The pandemic outbreak has shown the government's failure to manage the country and its citizens.

This article is organized into several parts. The first part reviews the literature review related to theoretical studies that frame the relationship between politics, science and policy. This section also attempts to explain the reasons why the anti-science phenomenon arises and why someone refuses to believe in intellectuals. The second part outlines a discussion of the Indonesian government's anti-science attitude regarding the Covid-19 virus. Controversial government statements and policies that are contrary to reason and the logic of scientific knowledge. The third section explains the implications of the government's anti-science attitude regarding the absence of policies that prioritize evidence-based policy principles and the negative impact on governance to control the Covid-19 pandemic. The final section contains a summary of this entire article accompanied by reflective notes regarding the issue of anti-science in the political government discourse.

B. METHOD

This article uses a qualitative-descriptive type of research. Data was obtained using literature studies from various sources and relevant reading materials such as books, journals, online articles, and others. A literature study was conducted to examine theoretical approaches and empirical findings. The data that has been collected is then sorted to obtain accurate and scientific information. Therefore, this article uses a data triangulation strategy by confirming information from various literature sources to ensure the validity of the data. The data that has been sorted is then presented using descriptive analysis.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Politics, Sains, and Public Policy

Knowledge (science) and politics are two arenas that are not always separate and operate independently. On certain occasions, according to the context and locus present, the two often intersect with each other. The production of knowledge produced through a series of scientific processes and objects from experts is very much needed by various interested actors and institutions in making decisions. Meanwhile, politics can influence the dynamics of how the knowledge production process occurs and is produced (Jasanoff, 2004). Nevertheless, the explanation of how people's political orientation shapes public trust in knowledge and how knowledge can be intervened by politics is still unclear (Gauchat, 2012).

Knowledge becomes a basis for people to believe in something related to the world. With the knowledge they have, someone can claim the truth about something. However, because the production of knowledge is the result of the contestation of the interests of various actors and institutions, it has caused truth claims to be not absolute-objective, but rather relative-subjective. This means that people can rely on different truth claims that they believe in even the same thing. Political aspects complicate the situation. Politics talks about power and formal institutions (state/government) which become an arena of struggle for various actors so that people's beliefs in knowledge are often politicized. Trust is important in politics because it is related to legitimacy. It is not surprising that (Foucault, 2017) states that knowledge can be a basis or source of power.

Relatively subjective knowledge, even being an instrument of power, has the implication that belief in truth becomes biased and ambiguous. The production of

knowledge that has been tested scientifically, rationally and logically is not even trusted by the public, and the public can even question or challenge the results of that knowledge production for various reasons. There is a tendency for individuals or groups to be anti-science. Anti-science is defined as suspicion and distrust of intellectuals (knowledge products) and experts in any form (can be in the form of rejection, ignoring, pessimism, scepticism) (Merkley, 2020). Anti-science attitudes have apparently become a global discourse that has spread to various countries in the world. This tendency not only affects civilians but also politicians and government officials, namely, they show an attitude of rejection towards scientific findings that conflict with their core (or alternative) beliefs (Kraft, Lodge and Taber, 2015).

In another dimension, Motta (2018) states that anti-science does not merely take the form of rejection of intellectuals but in the form of political support for politicians who are sceptical of intellectuals or experts). This means that politicians have a very significant impact in influencing public trust in knowledge. Politicians who are anti-science are used as a reference for citizens to also show an anti-science attitude and even become political support for politicians. In certain contexts, politicians use anti-science attitudes to capitalize them into political support. This is especially effective for politicians who like to use populist methods. Anti-science is favoured by many politicians because it is considered the most effective strategy in accumulating public support (Hofstadter, 1962; Merkley, 2020).

The reasons why anti-science attitudes emerge are still debated. Experts have various views regarding this matter. Public rejection of scientific findings or expert advice due to disinformation, namely errors in capturing the truth of information (Petrovic, Roberts and Ramsay, 2001). This disinformation problem is further complicated by inaccurate and balanced media reporting (Hilton et al., 2009). Meanwhile, Merkley (2020) explains four things that can explain anti-science sentiment. First, there are basic values or beliefs that a person believes in. For example, someone who holds religious fundamentalist views tends to see intellectuals as a threat to religious authority. Second, it is related to a person's personality characteristics, for example prioritizing intuition over scientific and scientific thinking. Third, the influence of ideology which is used as a person's basic principles. For example, someone with a conservative ideology tends to reject expert findings that conflict with conservative viewpoints. Fourth, populism. The political elite's interest in gaining power, having influence and gaining legitimacy is carried out by building anti-

science sentiment. Public distrust of certain elites greatly helps populist politicians to spread anti-science sentiment. Methods like this can generally be found during election periods (Motta, 2018).

Anti-science attitudes are dangerous if they become a reference in public policy making. Policies are binding on everyone, coercive, and involve the interests of many people. Policies created based on anti-science sentiment can harm the lives of the wider citizenry. As mentioned at the beginning of this article, hundreds of thousands of South Africans died because President Thabo Mbeki refused to provide antiretroviral treatment to fight the HIV/AIDS virus (Chigwedere et al., 2008). The same thing happens in other developing countries where the government ignores evidence of the causes of disease and how the HIV/AIDS virus spreads. Including Indonesia, when the first case of AIDS was discovered in 1983, the government denied it because it thought it was impossible for AIDS to enter Indonesia because the people were known to be religious and cultured, even though this had absolutely nothing to do with it. Likewise, in responding to the Covid-19 pandemic, at first the government denied the danger of the virus, so it did not prepare a policy to prevent the spread of the virus. These cases emphasize that the government's anti-science attitude has the potential to cause the absence of evidence-based policy (EBP).

EBP is an approach that can help the government make appropriate policies by emphasizing scientific evidence and scientific methods resulting from rigorous research (Huw T.O, Sandra M and Peter C, 2000). This means that the public policies formulated by the government have gone through a long research process and involved experts in their fields so that when the policies are implemented, they can provide benefits to society. Shaxson (2005) stated that the reason why EBP is needed is to understand the ever-changing work environment, assess the impact of implementing policies, and synchronize plans, goals and desired results from policies.

Sutcliffe and Court (2005) argue that implementing EBP is seen as more challenging in developing countries where policies are not based on rigorous and systematic scientific evidence. This is due to several reasons: developing countries face political instability, conflict, weak accountability systems. This opinion is reinforced by Hornby and Perera (2002) that the implementation of EBP in developing countries is difficult to develop due to poor government performance and governance. Not only developing countries, the absence of EBP also affects developed countries because of the tendency of officials and politicians to be anti-science. America is the

best example in this regard, how the era of Donald Trump's administration gave rise to many controversies, such as scepticism towards Covid-19, which had an impact on the management of handling the pandemic in disarray.

In the context of a pandemic, implementing EBP-based policies becomes urgent during a critical situation. Covid-19 is the current world enemy which not only attacks human health but also paralyzes a country's economy. What would happen if a critical situation like this were responded to by the government with an anti-science attitude and ignoring EBP, as happened in Indonesia. The management of handling the pandemic in Indonesia is not working optimally. The government downplayed the virus and ignored expert opinion. The anti-science attitude of the Indonesian government has resulted in the absence of EBP-based policies so that the handling of the Covid-19 pandemic is not optimal and has given rise to many problems that are detrimental to citizens.

Government Anti-Science Attitude: Downplaying Virus, Ignoring Expert Opinion

Corona virus disease (Covid-19) is an infectious virus discovered in 2019 in the city of Wuhan, China. This virus attacks the human respiratory and immune systems, potentially causing death. The very fast rate of transmission of the virus makes its spread unstoppable. Countries around the world report findings of this virus. The world health organization declared corona a dangerous virus and a pandemic. As a new virus variant, no efforts to prevent and mitigate the pandemic have been found. This causes the situation to continue to be worrying. Experts are trying to find various ways to stop the spread of the virus and maintain the health of citizens. Experts continue to carry out a series of scientific developments to produce drugs or vaccines that can kill viruses. The scientific development of anti-virus requires a long process, so it is not in line with the massive transmission of corona. The implication is that many residents who were confirmed positive for exposure to corona even ended up dying.

To anticipate the spread of the virus, efforts have been implemented to limit human mobility. Because the flow of human mobility becomes denser, there is interaction between them, which triggers the transmission of the virus from individuals exposed to corona. Efforts to limit human mobility have apparently caused the wheels of the economy to become clogged. Everyone is afraid to move outside the home so that the economic cycle does not run normally. Every country faces a situation that is not easy when it has to be faced with two difficult choices, namely between choosing health

and the economy. This new virus means that countries have no experience in mitigating non-natural disasters, so they often fail to deal with the corona virus. So it is natural that each country has a different approach, strategy and implementation of policies in fighting against the virus. Not only developing countries, even developed countries, such as America and England, have been overwhelmed by this virus. In short, corona is the enemy of the world today.

Ironically, when the corona issue first emerged, it did not receive serious attention from the Indonesian government. While other countries are busy designing strategies to fight Corona by carrying out mitigation as early as possible, the government tends to show antipathy and ignore this virus. The government shows an anti-science attitude. For example, this can be seen from the government's attitude of ignoring the opinions, input, and suggestions from world health experts for Indonesia to be careful and start developing a strategy to fight the corona virus.

The government's anti-science attitude is proven by the controversial statements and attitudes of several ministers in responding to the corona issue (especially in the early days when this virus was discovered in Wuhan, China and became the world's spotlight) which were subjective and contrary to the logic of rational and scientific thinking. Luhut Binsar Panjaitan (Coordinating Minister for Maritime Affairs and Investment) stated that corona will not enter Indonesia because this virus cannot survive the weather conditions in Indonesia. Luhut also made a statement to the public while joking that Corona would not be found in Indonesia because Corona type cars were no longer produced in Indonesia. This corona type car is made in China and is no longer produced in Indonesia. So Luhut's joke gained momentum that corona cars no longer exist in Indonesia, and neither will the corona virus exist in Indonesia (Cnnindonesia, 2020).

Budi Karya Sumadi (Minister of Transportation) said that Indonesian people will not be exposed to the corona virus because they have immunity because they often consume cat rice. Nasi ikan is a term that refers to rice wrapped in banana leaves in smaller quantities. Usually, this rice is sold at street vendors at a cheap price. Meanwhile, Airlangga Hartanto (Coordinating Minister for Economic Affairs) expressed his opinion that corona would not be able to enter Indonesia because the permits were complicated. This opinion refers to the condition of licensing services in Indonesia which is still slow because the system is not yet well established and bureaucratic performance is slow (Cnnindonesia, 2020).

Even though the ministers' controversial statements are disguised as a joke, they show the neglect of high-ranking government officials in responding to the corona issue. Lack of showing a sense of crisis regarding the situation full of uncertainty and fear due to corona. When experts are trying to carry out scientific studies against corona, the Indonesian minister's attitude is that he easily raises irresponsible statements to the public. An attitude that a public official as a leader should not carry out. In fact, in a critical situation, society needs reliable leadership figures who can be used as references and role models for society in responding to the corona issue. The government's attitude of trivializing this virus has made some people also show an attitude of ignorance and indifference so that they do not easily believe in the existence of this virus. This reality increasingly worsens the situation of people's lives amidst the threat of the corona virus.

Not only limited to controversial statements, but the government's also anti-science attitude is shown to the public in other forms such as actions and policies. Syahrul Yasin Limpo (Minister of Agriculture) claims that eucalyptus necklaces produced by the Ministry of Agriculture are immune to the corona virus. Limpo is also often seen wearing the necklace at formal state activities, such as working meetings with parliament. This necklace was also planned to be mass produced in collaboration with Russia (Anwar, 2020). Limpo's attitude as a public official regarding this necklace has rejected the logic of rational, scientific, and scientific thinking, and he doesn't even care about criticism from intellectuals. The necklace is one-sidedly claimed to be anti-corona even though there is no scientific evidence from experts and knowledge institution authorities regarding the use of the necklace in warding off the virus. A number of countries in the world are still working hard to develop vaccines, which takes a long time. But the Ministry of Agriculture is proud to introduce to the public the anti-corona necklace which was produced in a very short time period.

Apart from that, the Indonesian embassy in Russia admitted that it had never known about plans to collaborate on mass production of the necklace. The government's actions through the Ministry of Agriculture lack accountability. Many experts criticize the government's attitude that it needs to be careful in making decisions and acting publicly without consideration from experts through rigorous scientific testing. This could potentially mislead the public due to disinformation. For example, the public underestimates the Corona virus because they feel immune by wearing a necklace. The public has the potential to ignore the rules for implementing

strict health protocols to prevent transmission of the virus. The Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI) does not agree that this necklace is claimed to be anti-corona but is nothing more than aroma therapy to help freshen breathing. However, the government seems to ignore the advice and criticism of experts by insisting on mass producing necklaces (Simanjuntak, 2020).

Ironically, the Ministry of Health, which should be at the forefront and leading sector in handling the corona virus, has not provided a meaningful response regarding the production of necklaces made by the Ministry of Agriculture. The Ministry of Agriculture's unilateral claim regarding anti-virus necklaces without going through a coordination process with the Ministry of Health, is proven by the statement by Terawan Agus Putranto (Minister of Health) that he did not know anything about the necklace made by the Minister of Agriculture. This story illustrates that within the government itself there is no good coordination mechanism in anticipating a pandemic. The attitude shown to the public is one of ignoring the virus so that it is responded to jokingly, making wild assumptions that cannot be scientifically justified. The government does not appear to be serious in handling the pandemic issue so there is no sense of crisis.

The government showed an anti-science attitude in responding to the initial issue of the emergence of the virus by placing a subjective belief that the virus which had become the world's concern was not found in Indonesia. In fact, many experts believe that the virus has infected Indonesian citizens. The Harvard University research team expressed the assessment that the virus had not been found as claimed by the Indonesian government because the government did not yet have a sophisticated virus detection system. This is because several neighboring countries have declared virus detection, so there are predictions that the virus should have entered Indonesia. This expert view was denied by Terawan, Minister of Health, who insisted that the virus was not found in Indonesia. Terawan challenged the team of experts to directly prove the results of their research in Indonesia.

The government's attitude of rejection of the virus and neglect of scientific studies was finally countered by the reality facing Indonesia. On March 2, 2020, the new government announced to the public that the virus had been detected in Indonesia or three months after the virus first appeared in Wuhan and became the world's attention. The first residents infected with the virus were two people from Depok who had previously travelled abroad. Indonesia's situation turned tense after this

announcement. Citizens are afraid of the presence of the virus; at the same time the government is stumped in formulating the best policy after detecting the presence of the virus. The government's anti-science attitude has caused the country not to seriously implement an early prevention system in dealing with the virus. The government did not take a significant role in responding to the initial emergence of this virus even though it had become a concern for countries around the world. The next section will explain the implications of the government's anti-science attitude towards the absence of evidence-based policy.

The Absence of Evidence-Based Policy

The Covid-19 virus easily spreads to everyone through the air via droplets. The virus attacks human breathing and under certain conditions can cause death. Covid-19 is a new virus variant discovered in this era, so every country does not yet have experience in mitigating this virus. Every day, the public is flooded with media reports regarding the dangers of this virus to human survival. After the government announced the detection of the virus, the situation was filled with extraordinary fear among citizens. People are afraid to meet and meet other people. They prefer to stay at home to avoid the risk of being exposed to the virus while monitoring the development of the virus from the media. Stalls closed because they lost customers. The streets became empty of human activity like a dead city. The wheels of the economy become stuck due to limited human mobility. The government asks its citizens to limit social and economic mobility (social distancing). Mass media news continues to report the increasing number of patients exposed to the virus and news of deaths due to the virus. In this tense and emergency, the government continues to look for the best format for adopting policies to deal with the virus. But the spread of the virus is much faster than the policy formulation process.

Neglect of the virus and rejection of expert opinion means that the government has not prepared an early mitigation policy. The government only started to show seriousness when it realized the virus had been detected in Indonesia. The government did not take a role in prevention at the beginning of the emergence of this virus. As a result, the government has not been able to anticipate the negative impact of the virus, causing citizens' lives to become increasingly tense, filled with fear and uncertainty.

Not long after the government announced the detection of the virus, residents scrambled to buy masks to protect against potential exposure to the virus. The large demand is not proportional to the number of masks produced. Masks have become rare and are sold at very high prices compared to normal prices. Initially masks were priced from 25-30 thousand to 1.5 to 3 million rupiah. As a result, not everyone can buy masks. The government is unable to control the surge in mask prices. Ironically, in a situation like this, the President claims that the domestic stock of masks is still safe at 50 million pieces. Even though there is no clear source where the supplies of these masks come from. A number of new ministries have started to set up agencies to respond to the issue of mask shortages. Erik Tohir, Minister of State-Owned Enterprises (BUMN) has set a mask purchase limit of only two masks for each person. Agus Suparmanto, Minister of Trade asked mask manufacturers to prioritize domestic demand over exports. The absence of disaster management funds used to address the availability of masks has made it difficult for the government to overcome the scarcity of masks.

The rapid spread of the virus has caused many patients to be confirmed positive for Covid-19. Hospitals are overwhelmed with patients. A number of regions reported that some hospitals were full, making it difficult for patients to get treatment. For example, ICU rooms in hospitals throughout the Jabodetabek area (Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, Bekasi) are fully occupied (Hastuti, 2020). Bekasi Regional Hospital was forced to set up emergency tents to temporarily accommodate patients (Ato, 2021). Supplies of oxygen cylinders have become scarce and expensive because every patient referred to the hospital requires oxygen to help with breathing.

A tense situation, full of fear and uncertainty are the conditions that residents must face. Discourse has emerged in society regarding regional quarantine (lockdown) to minimize the spread of the Covid-19 virus. Public demands for the government to issue a lockdown policy have come from various regions. However, the government did not respond firmly to issues that developed in the public. The government is unable to choose the best alternative policy with various risks from every decision taken. This stuttering leads to inconsistencies in the stance taken by the government. The virus attacks human health while causing the economy to become paralyzed due to the need to maintain social distance and restrictions. The government is faced with the dilemma of prioritizing health or the economy while the two cannot work side by side. Focusing on health and controlling the virus requires limiting human mobility so that

the economy cannot run normally. Meanwhile, maintaining a conducive economy with normal market mobility means opening opportunities for interaction and contact between people, thereby allowing the virus to spread easily and disrupting people's health. This dilemmatic choice does not necessarily result in the best alternative policy choice.

The government has shown reluctance to implement a lockdown policy for economic reasons. Meanwhile, residents including experts are urging the government to impose a lockdown. The government opposed public aspirations regarding the desire for a lockdown by utilizing political buzzers via Twitter, thereby giving rise to polarization in society (Syahputra et al., 2021).

The government's unresponsive attitude has caused residents to take the initiative to implement a local lock down. At the hamlet level, residents have installed regulations prohibiting residents from going outside without urgent reasons. Likewise, residents who are not from the hamlet are prohibited from entering. For example, this lock down initiative was found in several hamlets in Sleman and Purbalingga Regencies (Fahmi, 2020; Wicaksono, 2020). This local lockdown emerged from residents' concerns regarding the uncontrolled spread of the virus. Meanwhile, the government does not seem firm in taking stances and policies. There is no common ground between the government and the public.

Insynchronization also occurs at government levels, especially central and regional governments. Several regional heads are demanding that the central government issue a regional isolation policy for areas with severe Covid spread. However, the central government continues to show reluctance to impose a lockdown. The absence of a legal umbrella from the centre regarding the handling of the pandemic has made regions acrobatic in looking for solutions to overcome the virus problem in their region. The implication is that there are variations in how Covid is handled in each region. This condition often creates friction between the central and regional governments regarding which institution has more authority in handling Covid. The chaos in handling Covid has made people confused (Aziz et al., 2021).

The uncontrolled surge in the virus and the uncertain living situation of citizens have forced the government to formulate policies quickly and precisely. The government first issued a policy regarding social restrictions. Policies often undergo changes, showing inconsistency, stuttering and the government's lack of seriousness in handling Covid. This policy change does not touch on substantive aspects because

it tends to only tinker with policy terms. So far there are at least four social restriction policy terms starting from PSBB (Large-Scale Social Restrictions), PSBB Java-Bali, PPKM (Implementation of Restrictions on Community Activities), Emergency PPKM, PPKM Level 4-3. Differences in changes to social restriction policies are related to the number of cases of Covid spread in each region and regulations on economic sector activities. Frequent policy changes cause the public to be confused and even find it difficult to understand what the main differences are in the social restriction policies because they are considered the same. Apart from that, the implementation of social restriction policies has not gone smoothly, as evidenced by the failure to reduce the spike in the spread of the virus.

The inconsistency of the government's attitude in handling the virus can be seen in other incoherent regulations. During efforts to implement social restrictions to suppress the spread of the virus, the government dared to take the decision to hold regional head elections simultaneously in the midst of the pandemic instead of postponing them. The election was held amid an unstable surge in the spread of the virus. Another policy is that the government prohibits returning home during the Eid holiday. Homecoming has become part of Indonesian culture as an annual opportunity for migrants to visit their native areas. Apart from that, Muslim communities are advised not to worship in mosques. Public rejection was quite strong regarding this matter, especially regarding religious and cultural aspects so that it was less acceptable to society. The government's attitude tends to be ambiguous, on the one hand it has issued a policy of prohibiting congregational worship and going home to reduce the spread of the virus, but at the same time regional elections are still being held. Even though there are health protocol regulations in implementing regional elections, it cannot be denied that regional elections open up opportunities for crowds to occur during campaigns and at polling stations.

Experts often criticize the government regarding the inconsistency of government attitudes and policies that are not measurable, structured, and systematic. Regarding Covid data, for example, the government does not provide enough transparency regarding data on the number of residents confirmed as Covid. The government tends to cover up. The Doctors Association urges the government to open data on the spread of Covid in each region to be used as a reference for local governments in carrying out mapping regarding testing and tracing the virus. Poor coordination between central and regional governments and between ministries is an obstacle to data transparency,

which is difficult to implement because it prioritizes the sectoral ego of each agency. The findings of the Indonesian Forum for Budget Transparency (FITRA) are that the Covid information provided by the government is not in depth, reports on the realization of procurement of goods are still minimal, and the virus management program promoted by the government is not balanced with accelerated implementation (Tanjung and Saleh, 2021).

This presentation confirms that the government has failed in managing the handling of the pandemic. The pandemic has exposed the government's weakness in dealing with the crisis. The anti-science attitude towards the virus shown by the government when the virus was first discovered has contributed to the country's unpreparedness in anticipating the impact of the pandemic. As a result, the pandemic handling policies introduced by the government are less effective and do not address the root of the problem. Lack of coordination and performance management between government agencies makes it difficult to provide evidence-based policies (Hornby and Perera, 2002).

Evidence-based policy requires that the policy formulated be systematic, rational and scientific to achieve goals effectively, efficiently and on target. In the context of handling the pandemic, the government should embrace health experts, policy experts and other intellectuals who can help formulate the best policies. However, the government tends to show a contradictory attitude to experts. The government had announced that cases of the spread of Covid had slowed down and Indonesia had passed the peak of the wave of the virus. This was denied by the Chair of the Covid Task Force of the Indonesian Doctors Association (IDI) that field data continues to show the high spread of Covid so that Indonesia cannot be said to have passed the pandemic period. The government and IDI often disagree regarding the handling of the pandemic. Data on cases of the spread of Covid between the government and IDI are never in sync.

Political Leadership Crisis

Referring to Rigney's (1991) forms of anti-science, in the context of handling the Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia it tends to lead to two forms, namely anti-rationalism and unreflective instrumentalism. The first form explains the government's rejection and neglect of critical thinking as a desired quality to serve as a guide for the government in responding to the pandemic situation. Meanwhile, the second form

explains the government's desire to get results quickly and precisely even though it does not make sense to do so, thereby ignoring the principles of prudence, rationality and the long-term consequences that can arise. Claims about anti-corona necklaces, rejection of several experts, trivializing and joking statements, confirm the government's anti-science stance.

The government's anti-science attitude not only causes the absence of pandemic management based on evidence-based policy principles, but also shows the presence of a political leadership crisis. The impact of poor handling of the pandemic has resulted in low public trust in the government. Public legitimacy is shrinking due to various contradictions raised by the government during the handling of Covid (Mufti et al., 2020; Shanti, 2022). Low legitimacy influences the decline in the level of public satisfaction with democracy. Based on the results of a survey by SMRC (Saiful Mujani Research and Consulting) in August 2020, it was clear that public satisfaction with democracy had decreased compared to before the pandemic from 74 percent to 59 percent (Madrim, 2020). Covid-19 is tearing apart the normality of public life, the government's failure to manage the virus is making things worse. Anti-science attitudes and ignoring the principles of evidence-based policy make the virus seem even more virulent and frightening to citizens.

Covid-19 has shown the government's failure to manage the country and its citizens. The handling of Covid-19 can be seen as a context to explain the government's anti-science attitude which has resulted in the absence of evidence-based policies. This means that in different contexts there is a strong suspicion of the emergence of a tendency among politicians who are anti-intellectual for various reasons. In the short term, an anti-science attitude is considered beneficial because the decision-making process becomes faster by bypassing scientific rules which often take a long time. In addition, it is easier to mobilize the masses by intervening in public emotions to force them to only believe in the truth of the desired (subjective) information. In a crisis, the public's push for the government to respond quickly and appropriately turns out to be answered with an anti-science attitude.

The government as the highest peak of state leadership should be able to take a wise and responsible role in decision making. A leadership crisis occurs when the government fails to become an actor and institution that is trusted by its citizens. In fact, legitimacy and public trust in political leadership correlates with public support and compliance regarding the policies implemented by the government. Citizens' non-

compliance with social distancing rules and reluctance to strictly implement health protocols can be read because of low trust in leaders. This also emphasizes the importance of leadership legitimacy in overcoming the pandemic (Afrimadona, 2022). Anti-science attitudes and ignoring evidence-based policies in handling the pandemic have contributed to a political leadership crisis.

D. CONCLUSION

The Covid-19 pandemic outbreak has forced countries to design solid, rational, and accountable governance for handling the virus. However, the government answered this challenge by showing a tendency towards anti-science attitudes in the form of ignoring the existence of the virus. The government downplayed the virus and showed opposition to intellectuals. The implication is that the government does not have an established disaster mitigation scheme because it is not ready. This anti-science attitude has resulted in the absence of evidence-based policies for handling the pandemic, resulting in inconsistent and confusing policies for citizens. At the same time, the development of the virus is increasingly uncontrollable and is bringing dramatic losses to the socio-economic lives of citizens.

Poor handling of the pandemic eroded public trust, giving rise to a political leadership crisis. The pandemic has exposed the government's failure to manage the country and public affairs. Covid-19 is the context in explaining the tendency for anti-science attitudes to plague government elites. The main argument of this article is that the government's anti-science attitude has resulted in the absence of evidence-based policies, causing a leadership crisis due to messy government management. Rejection of science has become a reference for official government policy. This also confirms that the government as a state structure does not always create an ideal and rational bureaucracy as demonstrated by Weber.

Covid-19 is a context for explaining how anti-science attitudes have infected the government, making policies for handling the pandemic less effective in Indonesia. This article encourages broader studies in connecting anti-science political issues and policy. This is promising in a world that is experiencing a post-truth phenomenon. Further development for the next study could be a more in-depth investigation of elite anti-science politics in different contexts and issues to see patterns, reasons, and elite interests behind the intention of rejecting knowledge.

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