

# Publicity or impact? The use of crowdfunding by Indonesian social media influencers during the covid-19 pandemic

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## Abstract

Indonesia is marching toward tackling challenges during the endless Covid-19 pandemic. Under a situation known as VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous), a troop of social media influencers (SMI) paved the way to create crowdfunding initiatives. Shedding from the discussion of disaster capitalism, where individual or entities make profit from large-scale crises, also take advantage of the destabilized atmosphere, this paper analyses the initiatives of three Indonesian social media influencers in raising funds through Kitabisa.com from March to November 2020. Under the hashtag #BersamaLawanCorona (together fight the corona), the biggest crowdfunding platform, Kitabisa.com has gathered more than 158 billion rupiahs (11,2 million USD) taken from 5.655 campaigns during March to November 2020 period. These efforts are mainly pioneered by SMIs and their followers. Combining desk review and social media analysis method, the paper revealed that the crowdfunding initiatives by SMIs portrayed two sides of a coin: on the one hand reflects the emergence of solidarity and social contribution to create a positive impact, and on the other,

generates publicity. It is, however, too quick to conclude whether the initiatives reflect a practice of disaster capitalism, because the publicity that they generated for these crowdfunding initiatives were not higher compare to publicity they gained from their everyday content.

**Keywords:** *Covid-19, Indonesia Social Media Influencer, Crowdfunding, Publicity, Social Media Analysis, Disaster Capitalism*

## **Introduction**

The Coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) has triggered an unprecedented global health and socio-economic crisis. Since the official first case, March 2<sup>nd</sup> 2020 to July 2021, Indonesia has recorded 77.583 deaths of which 1.454 of them were medical professionals (nakes.laporcovid19.org, 2021, kawalcovid19.id, 2021). When the pandemic affects the population, solidarity emerges and the need to help each other grows. Community action is a vital part of the public health effort during the pandemic. Crowdfunding is a known platform to ignite community action to donate and gain more impact, particularly in helping the needs. In Indonesia, since the beginning of the pandemic, social media influencers are among the many who initiated using the crowdfunding to support health professionals.

Kitabisa.com is one of the crowdfunding platforms in Indonesia that has been used for various purposes, personal or social, from disaster relief to political campaigns. Established in 2013, Kitabisa has created the possibility to collect funds by taking relatively small contributions from many people. During the early outbreak of the global COVID-19 pandemic, crowdfunding platforms were primarily used for fundraising. They were being used to help in combating the health crisis, including Kitabisa.com.

Under the tagline “*Mari Bergotong royong membangun Indonesia*” (Let’s work together to develop Indonesia), by May 2020, Kitabisa has recorded 3,8 million users whom named “good people” (#orangbaik). Approximately 64 thousand crowdfunding projects had been facilitated by Kitabisa (Kitabisa.com, 2020). The platform has been used by individuals, organizations, private companies, government institutions, social organizations (NGOs), hospitals, and public figures, including influencers.

Kitabisa, as leading charity-donation platform in Indonesia, is not without criticism. Akbar and Irwansyah (2019) argued the practice of charity was commonly given to the closest people, neighbors and close because of

family relationships. Given the ubiquitous social problems, information and communication technology like Kitabisa platform has shifted the focus of individuals in doing charitable practices. Instead of practicing charity, Kitabisa becomes platform that perpetuates a capitalistic economic system: selecting social problems as display (production), sharing the ads in their owned or earned social media channels (distribution), and being consumed by individuals who are now rather to have quick, easy and indirect (charity) transaction (p. 117).

Social Media Influencers (SMIs) are among the many crowdfunding users that utilize the platform for social cause. Archer et al. (2021) stated the global pandemic has shown a spotlight on the sometimes-questionable influence of so-called Social Media Influencers (SMIs) or ‘micro-celebrities’ or “micro-celebrities (p.107). Influencers have been recognized as being a strategic and powerful tool in promoting products and ideas (Klassen et al, 2018; Abidin, 2016). Studies show that during the early COVID-19, SMIs were increasingly engaged by major not-for-profit organizations, governments, particularly commercial brands to create and distribute content for purposeful objectives. In his paper, Archer et al. argued that SMIs, just as private industries that make profit from large-scale crises, also take advantage of the destabilized atmosphere for personal gain by strategically positioning themselves as trusted information (and entertainment) sources, actively playing a role in deepening the inequality between those caught up in mass economic cutbacks with the ‘elite’ who is being looked to for solutions (2021, p. 108). Archer et al. argued that under the spotlight of disaster capitalism, the SMIs exploited profit.

In Indonesia, SMIs use crowdfunding platforms individually to gather donations for the medical professionals impacted by the COVID-19 outbreaks. Rachel Venya, Atta Halilintar, Andovi da Lopez, Baim Wong, Arief Muhammad, Afgan, Maia Estianty were among the famous names to encourage donation via Kitabisa (Adikara, 2020) and have used the hashtag #BersamaLawanCorona and #KitaBisaLawanCorona interchangeably. Within the first month since the first case was officially announced, Kitabisa released that approximately 8 billion rupiahs were raised by Indonesia’s social media influencers and Instagram celebrities (Hasibuan, 2020). The fund, according to the statement, is allocated to supply health workers’ needs, especially in the form of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as masks, gloves, surgical gowns, and various other medical aids (disinfectants, alcohol, and thermal scanners) which distributed to COVID-19 referral hospitals and other hospitals and clinics in Indonesia (cnbcindonesia.com, 2020).

This paper aims to describe how three Indonesia's social media influencers used crowdfunding platform to create positive impact during the early COVID-19 pandemic, and in taking the light of Archer et al argument, to what extend the three capitalized their crowdfunding work for their own publicity.

## **Literature Review**

### **Social Media Influencers**

According to Freberg et al. (2011, p.90), SMIs represent a new type of independent third-party endorsers who shape the audience's attitudes through blogs, tweets, and social media. While Abidin (2015) defines influencers as "everyday, ordinary Internet users who accumulate a relatively large following on blogs and social media through the textual and visual narratin of their personal lives and lifestyle, engage with their followers in digital and physical spaces, and monetize their following by integrating 'advertorials' into their blogs or social media posts."

Other literatures emphasize on its celebrity-side, defining social media celebrities as individuals who became famous via their social media presence, as opposed to traditional celebrities who gained fame from film, music, and TV shows (Khamis et al., 2016 in Jin et al., 2018). Jin elaborated that consumers have a stronger connectedness toward the non-traditional stars, and they perceive them as more authentic, which results in higher purchase intention of the endorsed products. These definitions imply an extensive network of followers; trusted tastemakers in one or several niches; engaging with the followers through social media; and monetizing their activities.

Other literatures use the term buzzers that generate electronic words of mouth for SMIs. Research shows the role of buzzers and WoM is significant in shaping a homogeneous consumption pattern. The audience no longer determines their choice of goods and services, as the media as well as social media influencers plays a role in shaping their choices (Akbar, 2019). Instead of growing as empowered individuals, in the era of digital media the public is the object of industry and capitalism. Truth is no longer objective, but the media determines truth through the role of buzzers and WoM (p. 225).

## **Crowdfunding, Celebrity's crowdfunding, and Social Influence**

According to Mollick (2014), crowdfunding is considered a funding method for a variety of new ventures, allowing individual founders of for-profit, cultural, or social projects to request funding from many individuals, often in return for future products or equity. Crowdfunding act as a platform or agent connecting investors with entrepreneurs. One of the advantages of using crowdfunding is it is real-time and open insight to the funding history and information about fundraising campaign.

There has been a rapid increase in celebrities participating in the crowdfunding, since they often represent higher credibility compared to other investors, especially if their image is congruent with the products (Choi and Rifon in Agnihotri et al., 2021). Agnihotri (2021) also found that individuals place a greater value on the opinions and actions of celebrities, as investors, if they have been successful as an investor in the past, even if the product was misfit with the celebrity's image.

Zhao et al. (2016) called influencers' ability to be key opinion leaders on social media as social influence. Deutsch and Gerard (1955) stated there are two elements of social influence, which are informative and normative influences. Informative influence refers to digital reputation created from the influencer's profile: the number of followers, volume of postings, and identity status (Liu et al., 2020). Profile attribution can be monitored and used by candidate donators to evaluate a crowdfunding project, initiated by an SMI, thus it can affect donor's funding decision. Normative influence, on the other hand, refers to the result of spreading information process where netizens are susceptible to distributed contents, identifying them and re-uploading those contents, so it can influence users in term of their decision on funding (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955). Cascades is the spreading of information process where contents are distributed to all social environments, starting from an individual uploading a content to be spread to his/her social environments and then it will be re-uploaded and shared by other social circles and so forth (Cha et al., 2008).

## **Publicity**

Publicity is widely known as public visibility or awareness of any product, service, person, or organization. It may also refer to the movement of information from its source to the public (not always via the media). Grunig (1992) mentioned public relations is often reduced to publicity. He argues that

publicity is a form of activity that should be associated with the sales promotion effort of a company to help air advertising and personal salesmanship.

Publicity is also known as an important strategic element and promotional tool due to its effect of intentional exposure on a consumer. This helps publicity gain an advantage over other forms of marketing, such as advertising, as it often boosts credibility (Lord & Putrevu, 1993). Publicity is also created through reputation management in which organizations try to strive via the web. Furthermore, as Aula (2010) stated, despite the fact that publicity, both good or bad, can be beneficial for an organization, company, or individuals, much of it is paid. Lord & Putrevu (1993) claimed that regardless of its benefit within the marketing sector, publicity is lacking the ability to be repeated, in comparison to paid advertising.

## **Disaster Capitalism**

Klein (2007), the one coined the notion of disaster capitalism, explained that disaster have become the preferred moments for advancing a vision of a ruthlessly divided world, one in which the very idea of a public sphere has no place at all (p. 49). He elaborated, every time new crisis hits, the fear and disorientation that follow are harnessed for radical social and economic re-engineering. Each new shock is midwife to a new course of economic shock therapy. The end result is the same kind of unapologetic partition between the included and the excluded, the protected and the damned (Klein, 2007).

In their article, Archer, Wolf, and Nalloor (2021) argued that SMI has made the most of the new normal. “Influencers deliberately position themselves to take advantage of the atmosphere of destabilization for personal gain” (p. 108). Moreover, SMIs have effectively embraced the neoliberal capitalist system, by rapidly pivoting to benefit from the upheaval: strategically positioned themselves as trusted information (and entertainment) sources, actively playing role in deepening inequalities between those caught up in mass redundancies and economic cut backs, and the “elite” who is being looked up to for solutions.

## **Methods**

This is qualitative descriptive research. Descriptive research seeks to systematically describe the characteristics of objects to be examined properly. Three Indonesian social media influencers are selected in non-probability sampling method, using two main criteria: he/she is social media influencers with

more than 1 million following users and has open crowdfunding platform for the purpose of Covid-19 donation that enlisted in 15 top crowdfunding initiative at the early of COVID-19 pandemic in November 2020. During the donation period, these influencers also used the same hashtag #BersamaLawanCorona (together fighting the corona). For ethical consideration, this paper uses SMI 1, SMI 2, and SMI 3.

The first step in addressing the research objectives, this paper used desk review to present a better understanding of how SMIs use crowdfunding platforms to gather their initiatives. This is done by observing their post on crowdfunding platform, Kitabisa, as well as their promotion done in their social media channels. Second step, to get the overview of publicity harnessed for the influencers, this paper uses social media analysis from the initiatives. Social Media Analysis is the process of gathering and analysing data from social network such networks such as Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and Twitter. Sponder and Khan (2017) described social media analytics as the art and science of extracting valuable hidden insight from vast amount of semi-structured and unstructured social media data to enable informed and insightful decision making. SMI's Twitter, Youtube, and Instagram were three channels that were analysed in this paper as they were used by the SMI's to generate and publicize their initiatives.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Our research objects: Among the highest paid Indonesian SMIs and top initiators for COVID-19 cause**

In Indonesia under hashtag #BersamaLawanCorona, a number of institutions, celebrities and influencers have been involved in crowdfunding through Kitabisa. There were approximately 5655 campaigns with a total of 168 billion rupiahs gathered under the hashtag (Kitabisa.com, 2020).

Interestingly, from March to November 2020, the largest crowdfunding initiatives came from those who are prominent in social media platforms. Most initiatives were aimed to help medical professionals needs during the early outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic. The top 15 SMIs and their initiatives are : (1) Rachel Vennya (celebgram) - Rp 9.2 billion; (2) Dr. Tirta (celebgram) - Rp 5.1 billion; (3) Arief Muhammad dan Tiara Pangestika (celebgrams, Youtubers) - Rp 3 billion; (4) Adib Hidayat (celebtwit/journalist) - Rp 2 billion; (5) Maia Estianty (mucision) - Rp 2 billion; (6) Cathy Sharon (actrist) - Rp 1.9 billion;

(7) Raffi Gigi Rafathar (artist/Youtuber) – Rp 1.5 billion; (8) Alshad Kautsar (Youtuber) – Rp 736 million; (9) Hansol Jang (Youtuber) – Rp 666 million; (10) Andrea Dian (actrist) – Rp 635 million; (11) Atta Halilintar (Youtuber) – Rp 608 million; (12) Cynthia Tan (fashion Designer/celebgram) – Rp 575 million; (13) Dwi Handayani (celebgram/celebtwit) – Rp 501 million; (14) Velove Vexia (actrist) – Rp 418 million; (15) Augie Fantinus (TV and radio Presenter/Youtuber) – Rp 418 million (taken from: <https://galangdana.kitabisa.com/partners/bersamalawancorona> in November, 2020)

In this research, the discussion will focus on three influencers who have initiated crowdfunding: SMI 1, SMI 2, and SMI 3. The three were among the afore mentioned names successfully gather billions of donations for the COVID-19 crisis. As Zhao et al (2016) concept on social influence, this section will explore the informative influence (of these SMIs as crowdfunding initiators.

### **SMI 1**

SMI 1 is 25 years old who has 5.1 million followers on Instagram, and 1,3 million Youtube subscribers in November, 2020. SMI 1 is known for her social media contents on lifestyle, travelling, beauty, and family. Influencer 1 created all the contents and uploaded them with her image as a modern Muslim mother (Kumparan.com, 2020). Influencer 1 received job offers as endorser to promote various products and services that varies from household needs such as toilet cleaner brand, floor cleaner and halal dish detergent brand, as well as her own slim beauty product. Influencer 1 also received endorser job for fashion and food products that often were uploaded through Instagram Story. Several businesses owned by Influencer 1 such as in culinary sector with Sate Goreng Taichan, Rumah Sedep, and Ngikan. Besides, Influencer 1 also has business on fashion sector including Mahika Kids and Vel The Modest (Kumparan.com, 2020).

### **SMI 2**

Influencer 2 is a member of a prominent family in Indonesia. The 26 years old man has a deposit of popularity because his family is quite popular in Indonesia (Correcto.id, 2020). Influencer 2 becomes more popular by actively uploading contents through Instagram and Youtube. His Instagram account has around 16 million followers, while his Youtube has 26 million subscribers. These numbers are fantastic achievement which makes Influencer

2 as Southeast Asia’s top Youtuber with the highest number of subscribers (Liputan6.com, 2020). SMI 2 is the eightieth richest Youtuber in the world with monthly income approximately 23 billions rupiahs (Cnbcindonesia.com, 2020). Youtube is the main platform for SMI 2 to gain his popularity, but Instagram also has important role on it. Contents around lifestyle, sports, automotive and games are mostly uploaded in SMI 2 social media. In addition to that, SMI 2’s creative avenue as a film director and singer were often highlighted as well as messages on the key to success and hard work. SMI 2 endorses major brands including Samsung and Smartfren.

### SMI 3

SMI 3 is an influencer that also committed in crowdfunding initiative in the midst of Covid-19 pandemic. The 30 years old man was firstly known through social media platform Twitter under an anonymous account and a book that adapted to widescreen. His Instagram account has 2.4 million followers while his Youtube account has about 2.5 million subscribers. Based observation, Influencer 3’s Instagram contents were focused on lifestyle, family and automotive. As reported by Republika.co.id (2020), Influencer 3 has developed eight businesses, starting from culinary, cellphone to journal book as well as platform to bridge sellers online and offline. He also endorsed major brands such as Pepsodent, ASUS, and Smartfren.

The three SMIs have shown credibility both as successful entrepreneurs as well as marketing instruments, as product and services endorser, for major brands. During the first month of COVID-19 outbreak, SMI 1 started her crowdfunding project on March 16, 2020, while SMI 2 and SMI 3 started theirs on 17 and 18 of March 2020, respectively (Kitabisa.com, 2020). Table 1 shows the level of social media fame followed by the crowdfund initiative that each SMI has created.

**Table 1. Crowdfunding Initiatives by SMIs at the early Covid-19 Pandemic**

Name of influencer	SMI 1	SMI 2	SMI 3
Instagram account	Verified account	Verified account	Verified account
Number of Followers*)	5,1 million	16 million	2,4 million

Name of influencer	SMI 1	SMI 2	SMI 3
<b>Twitter account</b>	N/A	Verified account	Verified account
Number of Followers*)	N/A	104,7 thousand	4,9 million
<b>Youtube account</b>	Verified account	Verified account	Verified account
Number of subscribers*)	1,32 million	26,2 million	2,59 million
Volume of Posts*)	84 videos	1,144 videos	399 videos
<b>Title of crowdfunding initiative</b>	Mutual Help Against Covid-19 (Tolong Menolong Lawan Covid-19)	HELP Nurses! Masks & PPE Needed! (TOLONG Para Perawat! Masker & APD Dibutuhkan!)	Fight Covid-19: Emergency Fund for the Society (Melawan COVID-19: Dana Darurat Untuk Masyarakat)
<b>Link of crowdfunding initiative</b>	<a href="https://kitabisa.com/campaign/bersamacegahcovid19">https://kitabisa.com/campaign/bersamacegahcovid19</a>	<a href="https://kitabisa.com/campaign/melawancovid19">https://kitabisa.com/campaign/melawancovid19</a>	<a href="https://kitabisa.com/campaign/danadaruratcovid19">https://kitabisa.com/campaign/danadaruratcovid19</a>
Number of collected donation **)	Rp9,205,530,814	Rp608,455,236	Rp3,050,628,242
Number of donator **)	138,173 individuals	8,633 individuals	45,788 individuals
<b>Used Platform</b>	Kitabisa and Instagram	Kitabisa and Instagram	Kitabisa and Instagram

Source: Instagram, Twitter, Youtube, and Kitabisa.com

\*) data taken in Mei 2020)

\*\*) data taken in November 2020

From Table 1 it can be inferred that SMI 1 gathered more fund at the early stage of COVID-19 pandemic with less followers than SMI 2 and SMI 3 and more donators joining her cause.

## Positive outcome from SMIs crowdfunding initiatives

In November 2020, in their official statement, Kitabisa recorded 158 billion rupiahs of donations from March to November 2020 period only. (Latest financial audit from Ernst and Young, displayed in their page, Kitabisa Foundation collected a total donation of 835 billion rupiahs in 2020 only, and total revenue for administrative cost up to 36 billion rupiahs (Kitabisa.com, 2022)).

From each crowdfunding initiative, Kitabisa provides a link that encourage transparency on the use of the fund. However, no detail financial report provided from each of the campaigns. Table 2 resumes the funding distribution from the three SMIs crowdfunding initiatives taken from each SMIs' initiative link.

**Table 2. Distribution of Donation from Each SMI – Recap**

Person/ Initiative	Reporting year	Distribution of Donation		
		Beneficiaries	Form of Donation	Location
SMI 1	2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health workers</li> <li>• COVID referral (and non-referral) hospitals</li> <li>• Underprivileged communities</li> <li>• Funeral attendant</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• items of Personal Protective Equipments (PPE)</li> <li>• 11 units of ventilators UI covent 20</li> <li>• Sanitary &amp; hygiene equipment for public facility</li> <li>• Multivitamins and personal hygiene/PPE</li> <li>• Meals and logistic for funeral attendant</li> </ul>	(not specified)

Person/ Initiative	Reporting year	Distribution of Donation		
		Beneficiaries	Form of Donation	Location
SMI 2	2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health workers</li> <li>• 14 Hospitals</li> <li>• Underprivileged communities</li> <li>• General public</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)</li> <li>• Public handwasher equipment</li> </ul>	Depok, Bandung, Banten DKI Jakarta North, Central and East Jakarta, Bayan, Banyumas, Toli-toli, Morowali, North Sulawesi, Sindang Barang, Halmaera, Pasuruan, Palembang, Surakarta, Pegadegan, Bulili
SMI 3	2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal</li> <li>• Underprivileged entrepreneurs.</li> <li>• Small Medium Enterprises</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Startup capital for NTT communities (fishing boats, empowerment programs, training and education, lending-scheme capital)</li> <li>• Business capital for SMEs and personal</li> <li>• Business capital for warong renovation, shopping SMEs programs, vending charts)</li> <li>• Essential needs (sembako)</li> </ul>	15 provinces in Indonesia

There is no detailed information whether the donators coming from each SMIs' followers or from her/his own funds. SMI 1 revealed she spent 775 million rupiahs for her COVID-19 cause, whilst SMI 2 proclaimed his March and April income as youtuber will be used for frontlines health workers in fighting the COVID-19. From the provided link, each of SMI provided a bit of infographic about the use of the fund, complete with photos with beneficiaries, number of donation. In this sense, positive impact on the fundraising initiative is perceived well by the donators. Beneficiaries are diverse from medical / health workers, hospital organizations, underprivileged individuals and communities, small medium enterprises (SMEs) and funeral attendant as well as general public visiting public places.

SMI 3 has more savvy way in providing success story of the beneficiaries from underprivileged entrepreneurs or small medium enterprise owners who received his fundraising. The message shows positive impact resulted from the initiative rather than showing a mere of "funds delivery" (<https://kitabisa.com/campaign/danadaruratcovid19/latest-news>, 2022).

### **Publicity harnessed from the SMIs' crowdfunding initiative**

According to social media analysis carried in November 2020, it found a number publicity harnessed by SMI's crowdfunding initiative during the early COVID-19 pandemic. The following Table 3 describe publicity gained by each of observed SMI from their social media channels.

**Table 3. Social Media Analysis on SMI’s crowdfunding initiative \*)**

	Twitter	Instagram	YouTube
SMI 1	<p>SMI 1 doesn’t have Twitter account, nevertheless, the publicity she gained on Twitverse about her initiative ranked highest among the other. In 17 March 2020, Kumparan (news portal) tweeted an article about her initiative and got 35 thousand likes and 12 thousand retweet and 742 comments. This made SMI 1 enlisted in Indonesia Trending Topic on March 17, 2020. In 20 March 2020, Detik (news portal) also tweeted their article about SMI 1’s initiative and got 3400 likes, 955 retweets, and 113 comments.</p>	<p>SMI 1’s fist Instagram content on her crowdfunding initiative got 197 thousand likes, while her average post got approximately more than 300 thousand likes. Her second posting on the initiative got more than 334 thousand likes. This is due to her success in gaining 4 billion rupiahs donation within 2 days period only.</p>	<p>No YouTube content about her initiative was posted here.</p>
SMI 2	<p>SMI 2 promoted his initiative on his twitter account on 20 March 2020, proclaimed he will donate his income as Youtuber to fight COVID-19, especially, as he said, for the “income hero”. His tweet got 1300 retweets, 9600 likes and 658 comments, the highest interaction so far from his twitter.</p>	<p>Through similar content on Instagram, SMI 2 gained 700 thousand likes which is above average number of like on Influencer 2’s Instagram account of 500 likes.</p>	<p>Different from the others, its YouTube channel, SMI 2’s discussion on COVID-19 topic did not interest its viewers, only 300 thousand views, even though the average number of views per video can reach 1.5 million for each content. There is no particular content with clear call to action like in Instagram or his Twitter.</p>

	Twitter	Instagram	YouTube
SMI 3	Data shows that contents which were uploaded by SMI 3 on Covid-19 crowdfunding through his Twitter account got 3,100 re-tweeted, 10.2 thousand likes with 138 thousand comments.	Then, for contents that SMI 3 has uploaded on Instagram, it got 305 thousand likes and 138 bigger than average like at his content which around 150-200 thousand times	SMI 3 did not upload any content that related with Covid-19 to his Youtube account.

\*) This social media analysis was carried 14<sup>th</sup> of November 2020

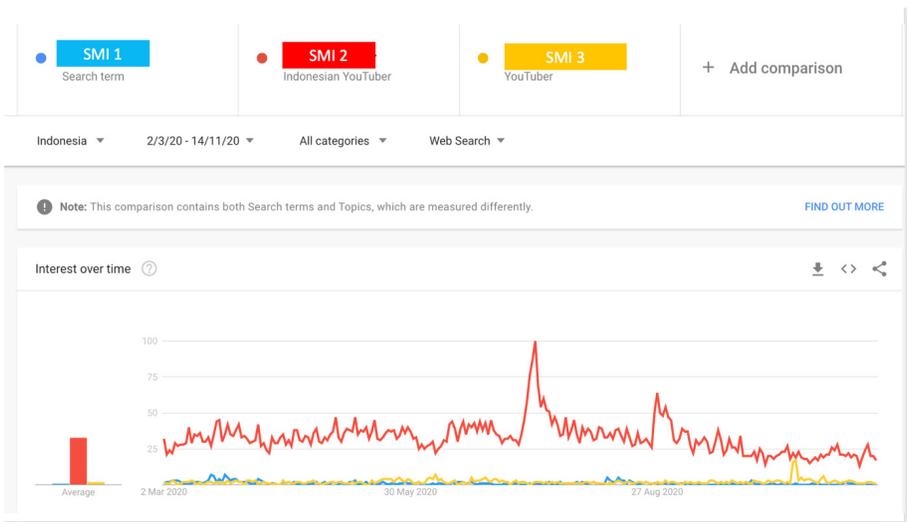


Diagram 1. Google Trend analysis between SMI 1,2,3

It is found that SMI 1's crowdfund initiative creates virality, as she successfully collected fund as much as 4 billion rupiah only within two days, to the point of earned publication from news outlets and twitter's trending topic. Indonesia's record museum (MURI) was willing to give SMI 1 an award because of her achievement, however she decided to refuse the award, which action created another publicity (Kompas.com, 2020).

SMI 2 and SMI 3 also gained some publicity on his initiative. SMI 2 gets higher interaction from his publicized post in Twitter and Instagram, as well as SMI 3 on his Instagram and Twitter account. As Youtuber, SMI 2 post on his

crowdfunding initiative did not get much attention compared to his regular content.

However, when cross-checked with Google Trend analysis, (outside SMIs' social media channels) during March to November 2020 the SMIs' crowdfunding campaigns. This can imply two things: first, with more than 26 million subscribers in YouTube, SMI 2 remained superior as opinion maker in digital media. Second, publicity generated about SMIs' crowdfunding initiatives may not as significantly contributed to their fame as their regular-everyday content.

## Discussion

Responding Covid-19 pandemic social media influencers in Indonesia, initiated crowdfunding projects to help the most impacted parties. Those crowdfunding were run through platform Kitabisa and the initiatives have been spread widely by influencers through Twitter, Instagram and YouTube. SMI 1 SMI 2, SMI 3, are both influencers and celebrities that are popular and reputed individuals who received significant media attention. Within a mere of two days, the initiative can gather more than 4 billion rupiahs (SMI 1), a 600 million rupiahs in two months (SMI 2), or 1,5 billion rupiahs (SMI 3), such amount of fund that is hardly gathered by regular fundraising initiative. Agnihotri et al (2021) highlighted the element of *trustworthiness* of celebrity endorsement that implies honesty, integrity, and believability of an endorser. In the light of Agnihotri et al (2021) research, this paper found there was not any similar project in the past by each SMIs on the crowdfunding initiatives, nor showing congruity with their previous endorsed products, nevertheless individuals/ investors seemed trust the SMIs' initiatives. This shows the role of SMIs as opinion makers not just in product marketing, but also in crowdfunding initiatives.

SMIs' initiatives through crowdfunding platform show how solidarity emerged at the time of COVID-19. Particularly at the early stage of outbreaks when physical distancing policy applied, people have urged to lend their hands for the needs. It has been proved with available crowdfunding actions under #BersamaLawanCorona, including that have been portrayed by the three SMIs' initiatives. Observation shows positive impact resulted from these initiatives as well as, further, on another level, encourage solidarity and increase social resilience during the uncertainty.

Furthermore, with normative influence they have, (Deutsch & Gerar, 1995; Chat et al., 2008) information spreading process from SMI message have cascaded and distributed to wider social environment faster, which, later, generate publicity for SMIs' celebrity's reputation. Looking at what Archer et al. (2021) claimed how SMIs are making the most of new normal during COVID-19 pandemic, referred as 'disaster capitalism' term, this paper found public awareness on SMI 1, SMI 2, and SMI 3 is heightened in March 2020, but when it is looked as an overall experience from March to November period, the publicity harnessed from each of crowdfunding campaign were not as significant as their everyday content.

Incite on Akbar & Irwansyah's (2019) argument on how Kitabisa has perpetuated a capitalistic system for charity, this paper shows the significant role of social media influencers in creating mutual benefit. As the platform puts social problems in the shop window, SMIs partake in calling out and cheering those who need to express solidarity and generosity (in an easy and fast manner) effectively to donate, and in return, gain more publicity.

## **Conclusion**

Crowdfunding initiatives during the early COVID-19 outbreaks from three social media influencers have presented two side of a coin, one as expression of solidarity and social contribution, and the other as mean of publicity. However, it is too dubious to say whether the campaigns reflect a lot, of as what Archer et al (2021) argued as, disaster capitalism. Social Media Analysis between March and November 2020 shows publicity for the three SMIs was obviously generated, but not as significant as their regular contents.

This paper is not without limitations, which paves the way for future research. This study does not dwell on each SMI' followers' motive on selecting certain campaign, nor exploring deeply how each SMI may represent symbol that can encourage action for their followers, or how the crowdfunding action during the pandemic has contribute to the betterment of each SMI's reputation management. A study with Discourse Network Analysis that maps out how a discourse and actors are related and contested may be useful to extend and deepen this paper.

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