

# Political trust on COVID-19 handling as predictor towards optimism on the new normal situation: Integrity and benevolence rather than competence

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## Abstract

Covid-19 has turned into a global health issue since April 2020 where WHO finally decided the spread of the virus as a global pandemic that affected more than 200 countries. Previous works have found that trust toward government is important in adapting to the pandemic situation. However, what type of trust is more important? This study aims to investigate the role of different domains of trust towards Covid-19 treatment conducted by the Indonesian government as a predictor for the perception of the new normal situation. The result shows that higher trust towards government will lead to optimism in facing the new normal situation, in which perceived integrity and benevolence become the significant predictors toward optimism. However, we did not find the same pattern for competence domain of trust.

**Keywords:** political, trust, optimism, new, normal

## Abstrak

Covid-19 telah menjadi masalah kesehatan global sejak April 2020 di mana WHO akhirnya memutuskan penyebaran virus sebagai pandemi global yang melanda lebih dari 200 negara. Studi sebelumnya menemukan bahwa rasa percaya terhadap pemerintah merupakan aspek penting untuk adaptasi masyarakat pada situasi pandemi. Akan tetapi, jenis rasa percaya seperti apa yang penting? Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui peran jenis-jenis kepercayaan terhadap pengobatan Covid-19 yang dilakukan oleh pemerintah Indonesia sebagai prediktor persepsi terhadap situasi normal baru. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kepercayaan yang lebih tinggi terhadap pemerintah akan menimbulkan optimisme dalam menghadapi situasi normal baru dimana integritas dan kebajikan yang dirasakan menjadi indikasi signifikan terhadap optimisme. Pola yang sama tidak ditemukan untuk domain kompetensi.

**Kata kunci:** politik, trust, optimisme, baru, normal

## Introduction

WHO had announced that Covid-19 as the biggest global pandemic in March 2020 (Cucinotta & Vanelli, 2020). The first case was found in Wuhan, China and the origin of the virus remains unclear up to now. The outbreak for global pandemic and emergency situation are declared by WHO based on existing data that shows that approximately more than 200 countries are infected, the number of cases outside China increased 13-fold and the number of countries with cases increased three-fold. Covid-19 becomes the global pandemic that occurs after 100 years since the Spanish flu attacked the world in 1918 (Trilla, Trilla, & Daer, 2008). Moreover, this virus is said to become the biggest pandemic since five years later because the in-

fection scale is larger than SARS (Zhong, et al., 2003); avian influenza or H5N1 (Chen, et al., 2005); MERS (Ki, 2015), and Ebola (Bermejo, et al., 2006). Due to this emergency situation, many countries around the world had decided extraordinary policies, such as lockdown and social restriction as the attempts to prevent the widespread of Covid-19. As for consequences, these policies are possible to bring negative effects for many countries and also economic situation around the world, such as economic recession and loss of jobs for some groups of people.

Through this situation, many countries have to live in an emergency situation where new behavior must be adapted in society in a short period of time. Strict health protocol, such as the use of mask, social and physical distancing, res-

triction of mass activities and increasing awareness to regularly washing hands after making social contact with objects are some fundamental behaviors are new activities in microscale that encouraged by Government around the world to prevent the virus spread. At the macro level, some actions that have been taken by many Governments around the world are rapid mass testing and territory quarantine to stop the spread. Some countries that are successful with the treatments are also attacked again by the second wave that is less considered by many countries. Therefore, this attack becomes the issue that affected some countries to reopen again the quarantine or restriction. South Korea and China are examples of successful countries with rapid test intervention and digital surveillance that got the second wave attacked when they started to reopen again their social activities (Smith, 2020). Thus, it can be assumed that economic and social activities will be postponed for an unknown period of time. Therefore, this situation will be getting worst when there is no immediate emergency response from all countries where Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) predicted that global economic growth will reach -6% when the situation continues to raise (Wildan, 2020). From these facts, Covid-19 is not just a health crisis, but also an economic and social crisis so that awareness of crisis mode is fundamental for all countries in designing emergency interventions.

As one of the infected countries, Indonesia is also in a crisis situation to face Covid-19 through several policies and actions. Real-time data were taken in September 2020 from covid19.go.id, the number of active cases has reached more than 200,000, with mortality rate is reached more than 8,000 citizens. Few actions that have been taken by the Indonesian government are the financial stimulus for industries (Kementerian Perindustrian Republik Indonesia, 2020); cash incentive aid for low-income families (Ihsanuddin, 2020) up to financial aid for students in schools and universities (Puspita, 2020). Aside from financial and economic issues, the Indonesian government is also aware of psychological conditions that should be maintained during crisis situations. In response to this, the National Office of President Staff, Ministries, state-owned enterprises, and the Indonesian Psychological Association (HIMPSI) launched a program called *Sejiwa*, an online counseling service for citizens who have psychological issues during social restriction due to pandemic (Hakim, 2020). This program utilizes digital teleconference instrument to facilitate clients to meet psychologists for a counseling session for free. All of these programs are the attempts of the Indonesian government to pre-

pare citizens facing the new normal condition after the restriction begins to reopen. Aside from all interventions that have been done by the government, things that need to be realized is all the programs are just temporary in preparing society to welcome new condition before the vaccine is found. Thus, other preparation programs need to be developed to encourage society to maintain their optimism and other positive perspectives in facing crisis situations.

The new normal situation is the condition where society must comply with safety and strict health protocol as the instrument might be followed to avoid the transmission of Covid-19. In this situation, society will live in uncertainty where various negative emotions can exist at one period of time in facing social stimuli, such as fear, anger, and anxiety. Based on the perspective of emotion (Ekman, 2016; Russell, 2003), negative emotion is possible to lead people to avoid emotional objects, which in this situation can be some important parts of society. In this current situation where physical health becomes a priority for all citizens, the existence of positive emotion is fundamental to empower physical health, such as hope and curiosity that will also related to better physical health (Richman, et al., 2005). Therefore, maintaining positive emotion in the pandemic situation is crucial not just for individuals but also for society, and optimism is the trait that will guide to this condition.

Based on the argument of positive emotion, optimism refers to generally favorable expectancies about the situation in the future that relates to their condition (Carver, Scheier, & Segerstrom, 2010; Segerstrom, Carver & Scheier, 2017). Optimism is seen as the trait, or can be defined as the psychological condition that is developed in the internal human mechanism through several psychological processes, such as personality (Sharpe, Martin & Roth, 2011) and parenting style (Cenk & Demir, 2016). A study conducted by Scheier and Carver (1992) shows that optimism is related to positive health outcomes, a significant factor that is needed in this situation where a carrier of Covid-19 can be anywhere. Through optimism, people will aware of several positive habits to maintain their physical condition, such as taking healthy meals. From a psychological perspective, optimism is also related to positive subjective well-being, an inner psychological condition that related to positive emotion and subjective satisfaction about one's life (Imtiaz & Kamal, 2016; Scheier & Carver, 1992). As a trait variable, optimism can be understood by two poles: optimism and pessimism, and simply, pessimism is a low degree of optimism. Considering the nature of optimism as a trait, optimism is stable over time. Even though

this variable is constructed as a trait, every people have this trait only in varying degree.

Many studies have shown the positive effect of optimism through psychological and even physical health (Rasmussen, Scheier & Greenhouse, 2009; Scheier & Carver, 1992). As a trait, optimism functions as a psychological drive that leads individuals to have positive expectations about their life in the future. Therefore, considering the positive effect of optimism that positively has impacts on physical health, this variable is fundamental to exist when Covid-19 becomes a threat. As an attempt to encourage optimism at the individual level, specific psychological treatment named cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), a psychological therapy which focuses on shifting the previous mindset and embed the new positive mindset for an individual as the reference to grow the life can be applied (Dobson & Dobson, 2018). However, CBT cannot be implemented into the macro setting to encourage optimism as the fundamental trait in society, whereas, in this situation, optimism is needed not just in individual level, but also at the social level. Thereby, identifying variable that related to it becomes fundamental to highlight optimism in the level of society, particularly in a crisis situation where pandemics exists. Political trust (PT) towards Covid-19 handling is the proposed variable that will be examined by trusting the government, *trustworthy* will exist in a society that might lead to confidence and positive expectation. According to Levi and Stoker (2000), PT can be defined as the positive expectancies toward government institution as a trust object where Government will work by relying on public interest as the primary output.

PT as a variable that focuses on the relationship between people and government originally derives from the micro perspective of *interpersonal trust* which defines as the verbal or written messages from the trustee can be relied upon in the future by the trustor (Carlin & Love, 2018; Rotter, 1963). This type of trust consists of cognitive and emotional responses between the trustee, trustor, and trust objects where the connection between those can be named as trust relationship. A trust relationship is measurable depends on the context that affecting what kind of trust objects involved in this relationship and the measurement of trust level will be focusing on how trustors perceive the trustee. Different degrees of trust will refer to two basic consequences, trustworthy when the relationship is positive and distrust when the relationship is negative (Miller & Mitamura, 2003). Based on

this understanding, the concept of trust is fundamental to be applied to sciences that focus on the human relationship (e.g., psychology) and institutional relationship (e.g., business, politics, and sociology). In this study, we refer to the concept of PT from Grimmelikhuijsen & Knies (2017) who define PT as the concept of public trust towards government as the institution (consist of a group of people) by relying on three dimensions, integrity, benevolence, and competence. The effect of PT in a pandemic situation has been identified by Bargain & Aminjonov (2020) in their study which shows that compliance to strict health protocol during Covid-19 is related to a high degree of trust towards government. This study involves data tracking from Google mobility index, a digital platform made by *Google. Inc* to monitor the real-time situation of Covid-19 across countries. The index tracks the mobility pattern of society to mobilize from one place to another during the Covid-19 outbreak. Consistent and clear public communication becomes the key success to bolster compliance and finally can reduce the spread of the virus.

As an attempt to identify the empirical relationship between these two variables, quantitative research by relying on two types of scales were conducted. In order to measure PT towards Covid-19 handling, authors rely on a self-report instrument developed by Grimmelikhuijsen & Knies (2017) which consists of nine items. Modification by adding contextual information related to Covid-19 is conducted in all items so that participants are aware of Covid-19 handling as the main trust object. As to measure optimism, authors constructed five items by relying on optimism theory as the trait developed by Carver et al. (2010) and the context of the new normal situation that occurs in Indonesia after the Government begins to reopen again the restrictions. Optimism is a trait that refers to a variable that is stable for a long-term period and it is existed due to several internal processes. All the items are constructed through a statement and attitudinal scale. For the analysis phase, the correlation between variables and linear regression by entering and stepwise methods are conducted to examine the magnitude of predictors toward optimism as the outcome variable. Based on the understanding of PT that is able to produce trustworthiness like the psychological consequence, it is also possible to encourage positive expectation which might affect the degree of optimism. Thus, the authors hypothesized that each dimension in PT will act as positive and significant predictors towards optimism in a new normal situation.

## Method

### Participants and procedure

As an attempt to collect the data, the authors applied the non-random sampling technique, particularly purposive sampling method. Thus, in total 275 participants are collected, where 68% are female are recruited to participate where they were requested to fill two scales in this study. The mean age for participants is 26 (SD=9,34) where based on this information, it can be suggested that our sample is dominated by youngsters who are university students (50,9%). Participants are given the link to access the scales along with informed consent on the first page. The decision from the participants to participate in the study is marked through the *next button* that has to be clicked in order to continue the session. The two scales applied in this study are the *Citizens Trust in Government Organizations scale* (CTGO-S) and the *Optimism on New Normal Situation scale* (ONOS). Two instruments were distributed to participants through digital applications, such as *WhatsApp* messages, *Instagram*, and *Facebook*. Thus, after the data collection is completed, then the analysis is conducted through linear regression using two methods, enter and stepwise. These methods are applied to investigate significant predictors when three dimensions of PT interact.

### *Measuring political trust towards Covid-19 handling*

CTGO-S is developed by relying on two perspectives, psychological perspective, interpersonal trust as a micro point of view (Lu, Kong, Ferrin, & Dirks, 2017; Rotter, 1967) and organizational or institutional trust as a macro perspective (Sønderskov & Dinesen, 2016). In interpersonal trust, trust is understood by relying on two concepts, trusting and trustworthiness, where trusting refers to an expectation of the trustor to rely on verbal and written statements from the trustee that their relationship will generate positive results. When the relationship is going positive between trustor and trustee, trustworthiness explains the behavior of the trustee to act favorably towards the trustor. By relying on this framework, PT can be understood through the relationship between citizens as trustors towards government institution as trustee and how government delivers policy is the trust object. In a democratic country like Indonesia, PT is the core indicator to measure the legitimacy of government (Thomassen, Andeweg, & Van Ham, 2017).

This instrument has been utilized and adapted for the Indonesian context by relying on

the study from Wahyudi, Milla, and Muluk (2017) where this study involves two predictors, perception on social justice and interpersonal trust toward PT. Different from the previous study which involves the scale to measure PT in general terms, in this study, the author modifies the items by adding contextual information that related to Covid-19 handling as shown in Table 1. The action to modify the items is based on the basic concept of PT where trust object, in this context is Covid-19 handling, is the central element which affecting citizens to determine their belief and attitude of the citizens. Therefore, after the modification is completed, the authors conducted a reliability test using *Cronbach Alpha* for the three dimensions, PC, PB, and PI. The result shows that reliability in each dimension is higher than 0,7 for PC ( $\alpha=.78$ ); PB ( $\alpha=.82$ ) and PI ( $\alpha=.78$ ). This condition has been proposed by Tavakol and Dennick (2011) to indicate the fitment in reliability degree.

Based on the empirical framework developed by Grimmelikhuijsen and Knies (2017), the author follows three behavioral dimensions of COTG-S, *perceived competence* (PC), *perceived benevolence* (PB), and *perceived integrity* (PI) where each dimension is measured with three items. These behavioral dimensions refer to citizen's attitude and perception on different aspects of government institution where competence refers to the ability of an institution to handle Covid-19 spread, benevolence refers to an action from a government institution to maintain well-being during the global pandemic and integrity is more related to the professionalism that carried out by government institution to overcome Covid-19 spread, for example constructing policies to prevent the spread of Covid-19 effectively and efficiently.

### *Measuring optimism on new normal situation*

In this study, we refer the optimism as a trait, a stable characteristic that is formed through a complex and dynamic process of life. According to the psychological perspective, optimism refers to the trait where individuals hold positive and favorable expectancies about their future (Carver et al., 2010). Even though optimism is stable over time and can be changed only by psychological intervention with a case-to-case study, basically every person has optimism, only in varying degree and awareness on this variable is possible to be highlighted through several actions, such as communication (Jarrett & Payne, 2000; Suh & Shin, 2016) that leads to social support (Martínez-Martí & Ruch, 2017). Many studies related to optimism towards physical & psychological health and social support have been conducted on several issues, such as breast cancer (Finck,

Barradas, Zenger, & Hinz, 2018); depression (Anzaldi & Shifren, 2019); osteoarthritis (Ferreira & Sherman, 2007); oral health (Ylöstalo, Ek, Laitinen, & Knuuttila, 2003), and parents with autism children (Willis, et al. 2016). Considering many studies on optimism, it is assumed that optimism mostly studied in the micro and clinical issues through psychological intervention. There is a need for optimism on the macro-scale in this situation where Covid-19 is said to become a global pandemic and affecting society in a larger population.

In order to measure the degree of optimism in pandemic situation Covid-19, authors constructed five items through a summated rating scale from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree). The item construction process is conducted through two empirical frameworks, first is the basic theory of optimism (Carver et al., 2010) and

the second is the understanding of the current situation which occurs in Indonesia. Those items are "I see the new situation after Covid-19 will be positive for Indonesia", "The situation after Covid-19 pandemic will encourage human to create ideas and breakthrough in many aspects", "Economic situation in Indonesia will recover after Covid-19 ends", "I am sure that Indonesian citizens will be able to adapt to the new situation after social restrictions reopen again", "Indonesian government will be able to work for the interest for people in facing the new normal situation". Reliability examination using Cronbach Alpha is also conducted in this study to investigate the degree of consistency of ONOS. The result shows that the degree of reliability reaches  $\alpha=.776$  and based on the cutoff score from Tavakol and Dennick (2011), this result defines good reliability for ONOS.

**Table 1.**

*Items measuring PT towards Government in Managing Covid-19 spread*

Dimensions	Previous Items	Modified Items	Scale
PC	Indonesian government is able to complete the task	Indonesian government is able to overcome Covid-19 pandemic	1 (Definitely not agree) 2 (Not agree)
PB	Indonesian government truly considers the citizens well-being	Indonesian government truly considers the citizens well-being during the global pandemic Covid-19	3 (Neutral) 4 (Agree) 5 (Definitely agree)
PI	Indonesian government is honest with its citizens	Indonesian government is honest towards the information that related to Covid-19 case	

## Result

### *Correlational matrix between predictors and outcome*

As the initial phase of examining the relationship between three variables, we firstly construct a correlational matrix to investigate the degree of relationship between predictors and

outcome variables. Therefore, matrix correlation is constructed through the *Pearson* correlation between each dimension of PT and total score toward optimism as the outcome variable. As the result, all dimensions in PT are correlated with each other. As for the correlation between PT and optimism, the result shows significant correlations between the three dimensions of PT and optimism (See Table 2).

**Table 2.**

*Correlations between Optimism and the three domains of trust*

	PC	PB	PI
Optimism on new normal situation	.43***	.46***	.52***

\*Correlation significant at .05 level (one-tailed)

\*\*Correlation significant at .01 level (one-tailed)

\*\*\*Correlation significant at .001 level (one-tailed)

We refer to the degree of association as the variance score from the outcome variable which is contributed through variation in predictor variables. As an attempt to examine this degree, we also calculate the *coefficient of determination*

for PC ( $R^2=.18$ ); PB ( $R^2=.21$ ), and PI ( $R^2=.27$ ). These results show that the degree of association is varied from 18% to 27% in predicting optimism on the new normal situation.

### ***PT as Predictor towards Optimism on New Normal Situation***

In order to examine the magnitude of predictor variables towards optimism on new normal situation, authors calculated regression analysis through two methods, enter method and stepwise method. This analysis is conducted to identify the degree of contribution from our predictors when it is interacted with each other. Interaction between dimension in PT is fundamental due to the nature of trust which catego-

rizes as latent variable where affected through internal and external factors. Enter method is applied to examine the degree of contribution from all dimensions with the interaction among others, whereas in stepwise, authors also analyze variables which do not have significant prediction and re-test again the model after the elimination process has been conducted (Wilkinson, 1979). As the result, stepwise regression will produce only the strongest predictor when the variables interacting (See Table 3).

**Table 3.**  
*Regression Analysis with Enter Method*

<b>Model</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>SEM</b>	<b><math>\beta</math></b>	<b>t</b>	<b>Sig(p)</b>
(Constant)	10.641	0.758		14.034	< .001
PC	0.099	0.113	0.070	0.877	0.381
PB	0.195	0.116	0.142	1.692	0.092
PI	0.523	0.106	0.375	4.951	< .001

Note.  $R^2 = .291$

Through the enter method, regression analysis towards three dimensions of PT only shows one significant predictor, PI ( $\beta=.37$ ;  $p<.001$ ) when all dimensions have interacted with each other. This result shows that integrity is a fundamental aspect that must be addressed by the Indonesian government to highlight optimism in society. Integrity covers many areas of PT, such as how the Government commits to its political promise by realizing it. After investigating the contribution through the entering method, the

authors investigated the strongest predictor as a subtraction from or addition to a set of explanatory variables (3 dimensions of PT) towards the outcome variable (See Table 4). The stepwise analysis shows that two dimensions are significantly predicted optimism, PI ( $\beta=.396$ ;  $p<.001$ ) and PB ( $\beta=.179$ ;  $p<.05$ ) when it interacts with each other, whilst stepwise regression also eliminate PC as predictor due to insignificant result in predicting optimism.

**Table 4.**  
*Regression Analysis with Stepwise Method*

<b>Model</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>SEM</b>	<b><math>\beta</math></b>	<b>t</b>	<b>Sig(p)</b>
1 (Constant)	11.624	0.665		17.467	< .001
PI	0.727	0.072	0.522	10.112	< .001
2 (Constant)	10.759	0.746		14.426	< .001
PI	0.551	0.100	0.396	5.488	< .001
PB	0.247	0.099	0.179	2.481	0.014

## **Discussion**

In the context of a democratic country, PT is one of the indicators that define the legitimization of the existing government. The government in a democratic setting is the highest administrator that serves the society through several policies and regulations. Therefore, the degree of PT functions as the fundamental indicator that should be served in the government's dashboard to evaluate the effectiveness of national or regional policies, particularly in the crisis situation where Covid-19 becomes the common challenge for all Indonesians. The actions to improve health con-

ditions by maintaining social and economic conditions need to be aligned with some of the political actions that might bolster the degree of PT so that Indonesia can move forward and solve this problem smoothly without any significant social and political cost. Thus, in this situation, the government cannot work by themselves to stop the spread of Covid-19. They need participative actions from the society to deliver positive responses so that positive collaboration can occur between two parties and trust is one of the important aspects in that relation.

The role of PT is crucial in a time of crisis where Covid-19 becomes the primary threat for

the health conditions. The importance of trust towards government is shown with the study conducted by Bargain and Aminjonov (2020) shows that a high degree of trust will be positively correlated with compliance to safety health protocol during the pandemic situation. By utilizing data from Google mobile index, Oxford measures of policy stringency and official information on Covid-19 demographic data, they have measured the relationship between those three indicators. Specifically, the participants who deliver positive responses to the government's policies tend to minimize their degree of mobilization in society. This study is a reference where the existence of trust can influence some part of emotion within humans where finally compliance can be shown. Whilst, in this study, authors try to explore more on the contribution of PT towards optimism, one of the variables that are also important in keeping the positive emotion (Collins, 2007) during the pandemic season. Optimism is one of the keys in deciding the economic situation in one country due to it is correlated with the economic decisions (Puri & Robinson, 2007) and the stock market (Concetto & Ravazzolo, 2019). Two dimensions of PT are significantly affecting the degree of optimism, PB and PC where this result should be comprehensively interpreted. PB is more concerned with how citizens see how the government cares about the life quality of the citizens, particularly during the pandemic, while PI refers to the understanding of how the government is taking the right decision for the right consequences.

Various studies have investigated the consequences of benevolent leadership which might induce some positive emotions. Schwartz (2012) with his empirical framework, Schwartz's values identifies benevolence as one the basic value which possible to drive specific behavior as the subjective goal for human. Benevolence as a value is related to the action to enhance and preserve the welfare of the in-group. According to the study conducted by Martela and Ryan (2016), benevolence as the value is related to prosocial behavior, the tendency to help others to enhance the quality of well-being of others. Pro-social behavior reflects the positive attitude of caring and beneficence, two fundamental actions to enhance the well-being of others which might emerge some positive emotions, such as hope, happiness, pride, and gratitude. Through these emotional labels, by perceiving that government is benevolent, citizens might able to feel that they are not alone in facing this situation so that this feeling might able to reduce the possibility of stress, anxiety, and even depression caused by the pandemic situation that finally can affect the degree of optimism as well. This argument is supported by the study from

Fontaine, Manstead, and Wagner (1993) that perceived control over stress, the ability of a person to overcome the stressful conditions by selecting appropriate coping mechanisms, is positively correlated with the degree of optimism. In this context, perceived benevolence might become the element of coping mechanisms in society.

Besides benevolence, result from stepwise regression coefficient is also shown that integrity plays an important role in determining the degree of optimism towards new normal situation. From the basic understanding from Webster dictionary 1913 edition, integrity is defined as the state or quality of being complete; wholeness; entireness and unbroken state that is related to moral action. Literature has examined the definition of integrity more on the side of ethical and philosophical point of views which refers to human action, being honest, and wholeness (without any private interest) to take action or decision that is morally right (Bauman, 2013). As an attempt to investigate the connection between integrity and leadership, further examination is conducted by Bass and Steidlmeier (1999) who connect the dots between the perceived integrity of a leader with the character of a transformational leader. It is mentioned that integrity is one of the element of transformational leadership which characterized by four fundamental factors, idealized influence (II); inspirational motivation (IM); individualized consideration (IC) and intellectual stimulation (IS; Bass & Avolio, 1994). Furthermore, Bass and Riggio (2006) also mention enthusiasm and optimism as the emotion that can be affected through transformational leadership. Thus, this perception is the explanation why perceived integrity as one of the element of PT is possible to influence the degree of optimism towards new normal situation.

Covid-19 has become a global crisis that affecting more than 200 countries around the world where no one is having the exact experience in handling the virus. Therefore, the action to overcome this situation must be conducted through active collaboration between government and the citizens. Thereby, creative ideas and insight are needed in this phase to gather public attention and their willingness to collaborate together that might finally can reduce or eliminate the spread of Covid-19. This study shows that two elements of PT, integrity and benevolence, are significantly contributing towards the degree of public optimism. Some of the elements that might influence the connection between perceived integrity and benevolence toward optimism are perceptual of transformational leadership and the perception that citizens are not left behind. Thus, all of these elements should be utilized as

the reference in developing policies in the pandemic season where collaboration from citizens is the fundamental element.

### Conclusion

Trust in government is the significant factor in determining the degree of public optimism, particularly in a crisis situation where Covid-19 becomes the biggest challenge for all. Many countries, including Indonesia, have struggled have forced to take extraordinary actions to reduce the spread of Covid-19 using various policies, such as territorial quarantine and social restriction. Therefore, these actions gave caused tremendous impacts in some aspects, including education, social, and economy where the government must limit the mobility of citizens. From the perspective of psychology, this situation might become a psychological threat that causes stress and anxiety (Salari et al., 2020). Thus, the level of optimism in society must be maintained at a certain level to make the country alive and healthy. Through online measurement, this study shows that two aspects of PT are fundamental in determining the degree of optimism in a new normal situation where the public must live with the existence of Covid-19, perceived integrity, and benevolence. Therefore, a follow-up investigation with a more diverse sample is needed in the future to obtain a more comprehensive portrait of PT and optimism.

The connection between PT and optimism should become an empirical reference for the government of Indonesia in designing policies and programs in a crisis situation. Trust towards government is a variable that explains how the public perceives government to respond to the emergency situation and most of the time, public perception is fundamental to shift the behavior at the society level. According to this, emergency actions should be combined with political actions that deliver the message on integrity (honesty and fairness) and benevolence (caring and goodwill).

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