

**CINEMA AND PANDEMIC IN INDONESIA:
A SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE ON ATTITUDES TOWARDS COVID-
19 AND ISOLATION IN A SHORT MOVIE *POSITIF* BY JEIHAN ANGGA
AND HANUNG BRAMANTYO**

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Abstract: The COVID-19 epidemic has spurred Indonesian filmmakers to produce films depicting the pandemic's consequences. *Positif*, a short film on the COVID-19 pandemic directed by Jeihan Angga and Hanung Bramantyo and posted on YouTube on January 1, 2021, has surpassed over two million views. The goal of this film is to raise public knowledge about how to protect themselves from the corona virus. This article examines how *Positif* portrays a man who does not believe in the corona virus and how he eventually must be isolated since he has become infected. I argue that the filmmaker of *Positif* focuses on delineating the man's unbelief in the corona virus because it is a problem that Indonesia has had to deal with during the COVID-19 pandemic. This analysis of the film takes a sociological approach, viewing it as a representation of social realities. This article will unpack *Positif* through textual and contextual analysis. The result shows that the main character in this film, Tegar, does not believe in the coronavirus, and hence refuses to heed his family's and friends' advice. This film emphasizes the repercussions that Tegar must face. He was finally discovered to be positive and was quarantined. Tegar's obstinate refusal to believe in Covid-19 was eventually broken when several Covid-19 positive patients died. As a result, the film's goal is to raise awareness about Covid-19 among Indonesians who disbelieve in it.

Keywords: pandemic covid-19, social relation, isolation, short movie

A. INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has had an impact not only on the economy and health, but also on the arts sector, particularly cinema. Film production has been disrupted as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic's physical-social separation and lockdown policies, which have curtailed the creativity of filmmakers and film distribution. The pandemic situation, on the other hand, motivated filmmakers to depict the varied effects through moving pictures. This occurrence is consistent with the clear-cut notion that a film is a reflection of the culture in which it was created, reflecting the reality that evolves and develops in society and then displaying it on the screen (Irawanto, 1999:15). According to this viewpoint, the cinema industry serves as both a way of representing the epidemic and an outlet for directors. (see

Nugroho, 2019:73) who have personally experienced and felt the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. The image that filmmakers have in mind regarding the COVID-19 pandemic is a representation of what they feel and see every day throughout the pandemic.

Positif (released January 2021) by Jeihan Angga and Hanung Bramantyo, and *Hari yang Dijanjikan* (2021) by Fajar Bustomi are two films about the pandemic that were released in 2021. In terms of genre, films that raise issues about viruses and disease can be categorized as science fiction and horror (Han and Curtis, 2020). *Positif* depicts characters such as doctors, nurses, and patients, with settings such as isolation buildings. Pictures of medical equipment, ambulances, and special clothing for medical personnel can be found in the film. Doctors and nurses in this film carry out various scientific procedures in dealing with health. This scientific impression is, however, combined with a scary horror story, delineating a patient who dies in an isolation room and becomes a ghost that scares other patients. The atmosphere turned scary. Although the film contains some frightening scenes, it is not intended to terrify viewers; rather, it aims to educate them on the risks of the Corona virus.

Positif by Jeihan Angga and Hanung Bramantyo is intriguing to analyze due to the choice of theme and the government's role in supporting the creation of this film. Rather than denouncing the government's sluggish and disorganized reaction to the epidemic, the film legitimizes the ruler's attempts to encourage people to obey the policy. The narrative follows Tegar, a young guy who does not believe in COVID-19 and so is not disciplined in following health procedures, resulting in his contracting the corona virus and being forced to undergo isolation. Tegar suffers from depression when he is alone. *Positif* depicts the man's skepticism about the corona virus, which has been an issue for Indonesia throughout the COVID-19 epidemic.

Tegar's narrative is delivered in a straightforward linear structure that is simple to follow. Even if this film is watched by ordinary people, the lessons delivered through the characters' dialogue will be easily comprehended. The Committee for Handling the Covid-19 and National Economic Recovery, as well as the State Film Production (PFN), in conjunction with the Ministry of Communication and Informatics of Indonesia, lent their assistance to this film. During the Pandemic, the government is interested in utilizing movies to educate the people.

People who are physically and socially isolated during the COVID-19 pandemic will experience difficulties, particularly in their social and psychological connections. Isolation and quarantine cause stress, trauma, emotions of abandonment, and resentment in those who are subjected to them (Suppawittaya et.al, 2020; Kurniawan, 2020). When Tegar gets secluded, he is observed to be in mental anguish. He gets agitated and fights medics, but he still believes he is immune to the corona virus. As a result, Tegar's social relationships with his wife, friends, and medical personnel are strained.

The study of the nexus between film and the COVID-19 pandemic has been carried out. Some research results provide an overview of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on film production, distribution, cast, festivals and teaching in several European countries (Asker, 2020; Hanzlík and Mazierskac, 2021). These studies tended to be more technical in discussing filmmaking and distribution. Those studies have not in-depth examined the issues surrounding the pandemic depicted in the film.

Pappas et al. (2003) investigated the potential impact of movies on the public's impression of infection—a view that, if mistaken, may be harmful during epidemics. As a result, the focus of this research is on the film's audience. Meanwhile, studies on films with the theme of the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia have not been carried out. In fact, this study is important to see how far Indonesian filmmakers' creativity went during the pandemic and how the pandemic is depicted in the film in the Indonesian context. This article intends to contribute to the study of pandemic-themed films in Indonesia with a focus on examining how the short film *Positif* by Jeihan Angga and Hanung Bramantyo delineates the attitudes of the Indonesian people towards corona virus, health protocols, COVID-19 infection and self-isolation. Furthermore, this article also scrutinizes how the impact of community members' attitudes towards COVID-19 affects social relationships within the family and also in the wider community.

B. METHOD

The research is classified as qualitative since it focuses on presenting the phenomena of human existence during the COVID-19 epidemic in the film. The information gleaned from the film was then analyzed textually and contextually. The analysis of the film *Positif* employs a sociological method. This strategy is founded on the idea that the stories mirror institutional and cultural trends that spread our lives over the globe (Nascimento, 2019). The film *Positif*, directed by Jeihan Angga and Hanung Bramantyo and posted on YouTube on January 1, 2021, serves as the major source of data for this study. In gathering the data, the researcher watches the film several times and selects some of the scenes relevant to the topic.

C. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Before delving into the attitude of the film's main character about COVID-19 and the solitude he must endure, it is important briefly examining the term *positif*. It has two meanings in this film. The first, *Positif* denotes to unhappy meaning as it interweaves with a person who is infected by corona virus. The second interpretation is linked with a wife who is pregnant (positively pregnant) at the end of the film after a lengthy wait. *Positif* thus alludes to being positive for COVID-19 and pregnant, and it fits to the story progression in the film, which opens with a sorrowful image of a person infected with the Corona virus. The plot then shifts to convey happiness when Tegar learns that his wife is pregnant and that Tegar, after being isolated, tests negative.

The film begins with an inscription that encourages viewers to follow health guidelines: *Viewers are encouraged to follow health protocols as recommended by the government. Wear the appropriate mask, wash your hands with soap, and maintain a distance of at least 1.5 meters* (seconds 00-06). The warning at the beginning of the film is part of a larger campaign to use cinema to address the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia. *Positif* can be interpreted as demonstrating the government's commitment in socializing the necessity of implementing health protocols by referring to the government as the agency that controls health protocol standards.

1. Distrust of COVID-19 and Unwillingness to Follow Health Protocols

Jeihan Angga and Hanung Bramantyo imagine Tegar (played by Yusril Fahriza) as an obstinate character in the film. We can notice masks and hand sanitizer in Tegar's little bag in one of the early scene that uses a close-up technique. Tegar was about to leave for work when his wife reminded him to wear a mask and use hand sanitizer. Tegar just said, "Calm down, be safe," rather than agreeing with his wife's caution. The firm's response suggests that he underestimates the COVID-19 Pandemic's severity. Tegar also does not utilize the mask that his wife has prepared in the medium shot scene below.



Fig. 1: Tegar will go to work. He is not wearing a mask even though his wife has prepared a mask in a small bag

Tegar not only disregards his wife's warning, but he also neglects his surroundings. Tegar's attitude is illustrated by a scene showing a health protocol banner during the COVID-19 pandemic that is installed on a wall by the side of the road, not far from Tegar's house. When he left for work, Tegar passed the road and knew there was a banner. Tegar's apathy in implementing health procedures, as well as the banners he passes, highlight the disparity between community members' apathy and the government's efforts to remind residents by writing in public places. Meanwhile, Positif want to remind the audience of the necessity of adhering to the health protocol by displaying a picture of the Health Protocol banner hanging on the wall.



Fig.2: Health Protocol banner located on the roadside wall not far from Tegar's house.

The attitude of underestimating the dangers of the corona virus was also shown by some members of the public in various regions in Indonesia. They refuse to wear masks and practice social distancing. Even at the beginning of the news of the threat of COVID-19, some government officials actually underestimated it (see Fajar, 2020). The attitude of this neglectful official can certainly affect the community in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. People who do not care about maintaining this health protocol, even though they have been reminded by the government and officers in the field, often violate the health protocol.

When Tegar arrived at the office, he also did not wear a mask properly. Instead, the mask was lowered to the chin, while his nose and mouth were not covered. In fact, Tegar works for a courier company where he has to check the goods that must be sent and delivered. His other two friends wore masks as well. The contrasting picture shown in the scene when Tegar and his two friends are in the room further shows Tegar's careless attitude in the midst of the Pandemic situation. Two of Tegar's friends remind Tegar that he must wear his mask properly. But Tegar did not care. In fact, he responded to his friends by saying, "You have an overabundance of faith in the Corona virus." People like you can become infected... If I don't, I might not be as fit and healthy as this." (Minutes 2.56-3.20).

Tegar's stubbornness and distrust of COVID are subsequently demonstrated through a scene where Tegar is diagnosed as positive for COVID but he refuses to be taken to a place of isolation by health workers. When the health workers came to pick him up at work, Tegar actually intended to run away.



Fig.3: Tegar, who has been diagnosed as positive for COVID, refuses to be picked up by medical officers. His friends tried to persuade him, but Tegar still refused, even as if he wanted to invite them to fight.

The medical profession is represented by the presence of health personnel in Tegar's workplace. Meanwhile, Tegar's refusal to be placed in isolation demonstrates his defiance in the medical establishment, which has clearly asserted and confirmed the existence of COVID-19.

Tegar was eventually apprehended by doctors. Tegar, on the other hand, demonstrated his intransigence and skepticism of COVID-19 before departing. He was in good health, so the physicians had no need to take him. Tegar, on the other hand, was a COVID-19 positive patient with no symptoms, according to the medical officer (Asymptomatic Persons). We can see two medical officials, who are wearing complete uniforms to fend against the corona virus, the leader where Tegar works, and some of Tegar's pals in this long shot picture.



Fig. 4: Tegar will be taken by medical officers to the isolation area.

Tegar maintained his strong demeanor till he was hauled away by medical officials who were skeptical of his positivity. Tegar expressed his worries that the good decision was merely a business plan to terminate him when his wife Rini (played by Sekar Sari) contacts him. Tegar said, " It was incomprehensible to me. I'm a strong and healthy fish. Sometimes the findings of the tests are positive. I'm convinced it's all part of the company's plan to terminate me. Don't allow your employer be the same way. He wants to fire you but doesn't want to make a negative impression. As a result, using COVID as an excuse." (minute 9.11-9.30).

Tegar is described as a relatively young figure who does not believe in medical evidence. Strong minds are filled with suspicion and negative thinking about the spread of COVID-19. He alleges that COVID-19 is a lie. In the isolation room, Tegar conveys his thoughts and suspicions to Pak Asep (Broto Wijoyanto) who is also in isolation: "This pandemic is just a hoax, sir. We are just victims. Victims of the greed of global elites. This virus is not clear. Those who are healthy and afiat like me are even positive. Those who are frail like my friends are even negative. Money politics really hurts people like us, sir. Layoffs everywhere. Imported machines began to be sold cheaply. (Minutes 11.18-11.44).

Tegar's statement bears some resemblance to some of the conspiracy theories behind the Covid-19 pandemic. For example, there are conspiracy theories that say the Corona virus is used as a biological weapon to attack a country and there are also those who think the vaccination program is a program designed by a big businessman (Pranita, 2021). Tegar's mind seems to be influenced by this pattern of conspiracy theories so he negates the evidence that the Corona Virus exists. In fact, when the isolation patient who was in the same room with him said he believed in Corona, Tegar still behaved in disbelief.

Tegar's attitude that he still does not believe in COVID-19, even though he is already in isolation, is exacerbated by his impatience in undergoing isolation. Tegar's attitude is in contrast to the attitude of his wife, who actually asked Tegar to be patient and undergo isolation until the next test results came out (minutes: 15.37-15.40).

Positif film creates characters such as Tegar's wife and Pak Asep who are the antithesis of Tegar. By presenting characters who have different views about COVID-19, on the one hand there are those who do not believe and respond emotionally but on the other hand there are those who believe and are patient, *Positif* manages to present a balanced narrative. In a conversation about isolation due to COVID-19, Pak Asep told Tegar that he actually wanted to go home to meet his family but he realized that the corona virus inside him could infect his family. Therefore, Pak Asep patiently stayed in the Isolation Room while hoping that he would recover (Minutes 16.14-16.27).

2. Isolation and Social Conflict

Positif film constructs the story that people who do not believe in the Corona virus actually end up contracting the deadly virus. Thus, this film is indeed made to address those who disbelieve in the corona virus. The importance of this film

regarding COVID-19 is also to emphasize that the Corona virus really exists. Tegar who did not believe COVID-19 finally tested positive and had to be taken to isolation. In the isolation place, Tegar's condition declined because it turned out that he had actually been exposed to Corona.

Isolation room is described as a place full of rules. The residents of the isolation place, including Tegar, must follow health protocols. However, ironically, in several scenes in isolation, Tegar actually communicates and deals with medical personnel without wearing a mask. The officer did not reprimand him either. This fact may be because Tegar is the main character and in many conversations his face must be more clearly visible (the film's consideration is that when Tegar's face is highlighted, his expression will be clearly visible). Isolation causes Tegar to separate from his wife.

Positif creates two spaces that appear alternately in this context, namely the guesthouse where Tegar is undergoing isolation and Tegar's house where his wife is also undergoing isolation (because he also has to undergo isolation; because of his previous relationship with Tegar). To describe the relationship between Tegar and his wife in isolation, the film *Positive* depicts a video call between Tegar and his wife that can be seen on one screen. Although Tegar and Rini's relationship can continue through the help of technology, socially they are physically far apart. They cannot live their daily lives together.

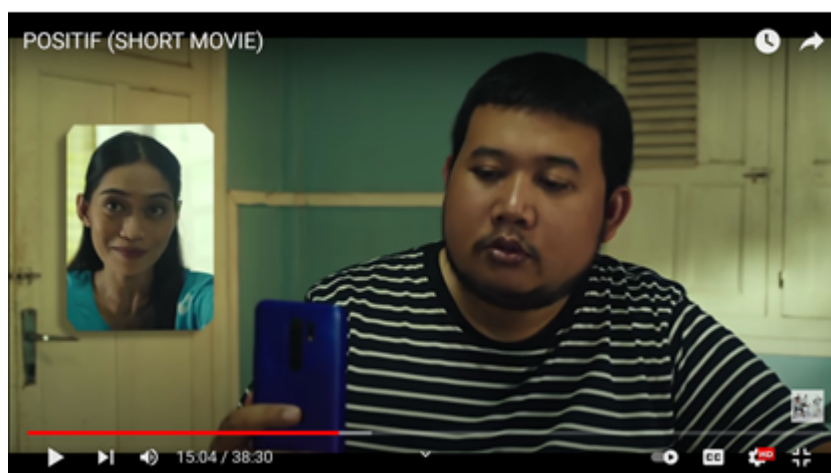


Fig. 5: Tegar and his wife who are in isolation are on a video call

Rini looks to be happy in the medium frame above, despite the fact that she is also undergoing self-isolation. He was able to maintain such an attitude since he was alone and not under any duress. Meanwhile, Tegar's demeanor seems sad, gloomy, and enraged on the screen above, as well as in several scenes throughout the film. Tegar characterized Rini as a "straight" person. This severe comment appears to be linked to Rini's mindset, which is not critical of the Pandemic phenomenon and is more inclined to fight the COVID-19 Pandemic with government-recommended health practices.

Tegar was uneasy in his seclusion due to boredom. As a result, Tegar is frequently irritable and unpleasant whenever Rini calls. Rini grew concerned about Tegar's condition after hearing from Tegar that Pak Asep had died. She requested

Tegar to accept the medical staff's advise as a wife. Tegar, on the other hand, maintains that COVID-19 is a fiction. Tegar and Rini's quarrel really made things worse in their relationship. Tegar was told that if he did not want to be counseled, he should take care of himself, according to Rini. (Seconds: 26.29-26.34)

Social conflicts also arise between Tegar and the doctor who takes care of him. When Tegar's body temperature is high, he is treated by a doctor. However, Tegar threw the oxygen tube out of his mouth and showed an angry attitude. The doctor then said, "If you don't obey, your physical condition continues to decline, and your lab results don't show good development, in fact you can stay here longer. We're here to do everything we can to keep the virus out of your body. Those closest to you, who are strong, have low immunity, it can get worse." (Minutes 28.45-29.14)



Figure 6: Tegar's deteriorating health was being examined by a doctor. Tegar was then urged by the doctor to follow his counsel.

When it comes to the COVID-19 Pandemic, a doctor displays both authority and principled firmness. He is still convinced Tegar was infected with the corona virus. Meanwhile, Tegar is sure that he has not been afflicted with the corona virus. He continues to deny whatever medical care he receives. The contestation or conflict between Tegar's cynicism about the pandemic and the dedication of physicians and other medical workers demonstrates two conflicting viewpoints that constitute the film's source of tension.

Tegar's attitude eventually altered once he discovered he had COVID-19. Tegar's awareness was further boosted by the news that Rini was expecting. Tegar feels happy, and he urges his wife to follow the health rules in order for her and her kid to remain healthy. In fact, when Rini mentioned vaccines in Indonesia, Tegar responded with a comforting tone, "We have to queue first when it's ready to be distributed. For you, for our children." (minutes 24.34-24.40). Tegar's statement is consistent with the Indonesian government's intention to increase vaccination. The

question at the end indicates that the Positive film is used as a medium for public education in dealing with COVID-19.

D. CONCLUSION

Positif film illustrates that Tegar's attitude of not believing in the corona virus is caused by his belief that the news of the spread of the corona virus is only an international conspiracy to gain profit. Because of his strong beliefs, he has refused to follow health regulations and accept the advice of doctors and nurses. Tegar's distrust of COVID-19, as well as his disdain of the medical community's efforts to battle the coronavirus, puts him at odds with his wife, friends, and health-care providers.

The consciousness of Tegar who does not believe in the Corona virus appears after he has contracted the virus so that his body condition worsens. *Positif* has an agenda to straighten out the views of people who do not believe in corona. The government is hoping for this shift in attitude so that residents become more aware of the significance of following health standards.. The film's plot ends with a happy ending in which Tegar is relieved to be rid of the coronavirus and discovers his wife is expecting. This makes Positive a film that encourages people to be hopeful in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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