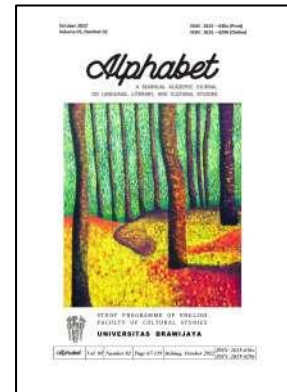


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Relations in Virtual Performing Art Activities in the Time of Crisis

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Abstract

This study focuses on describing the relationships in virtual spaces as a result of the impact of the changes in the pandemic. The changes are in terms of activities carried out by the Student Activity Unit of Matapena of Faculty of Cultural Studies, Universitas Brawijaya (henceforth, FCS UB) in virtual spaces. In this case, there were some adaptations carried out by the organization. By applying a theory by Marvin Harris about Cultural Materialism, this study revealed the mode of production in the form of changes that affect the social structure. In addition, the changes also influenced the community consumers in cultural materialism. By using an ethnographic method, it observed their adaptation process. The results of this study showed that there was a process of changing cultural ethics during virtual performing art activities and there were various kinds of adaptations made to certain conditions. Moreover, material needs during the activities were also tailored to the conditions at the time of crisis. Despite these changes, they did not remove the essence of the events in the virtual spaces.

Keywords: Changes in Cultural Ethics; Structural Adaptation; Material Changes

The current era of the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on cultural changes, including a change toward a virtual space that covers many activities. These changes are perceived not to occur in time, but there are efforts to revolutionize these adaptations. These changes are in terms of the use of various features of social media applications as a support for the adaptation process. Therefore, this has an impact on production needs which then certainly affect the activities carried out by the public. In this regard, the public must make adjustments to the situations.

Change itself has many definitions. Following Putra, a change is a process that continues to happen without being realized by every society so it evolves in its development (Putra,

2020). However, this leads to a revolution against the change itself as a result of the pandemic which then contributed to the urgency of virtual spaces. From these changes caused by the pandemic then virtual communication activities grow rapidly. They also affected the way people do their activities, where individuals who used to meet face-to-face then switch the mode to meeting in a webinar on a virtual screen (Putri, 2020). In addition, to the cultural shift that grows rapidly, the virtual production mode has become an urgent matter during the pandemic. It then spreads from various aspects which eventually makes it easier for every individual to communicate without having to meet face to face (Putri, 2020). This includes office work that shifts to be carried out at home, as well as online businesses that

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adjust to people's needs which then shift and follow the specified production pattern.

However, the pandemic change is also an obstacle, especially in the adaptation process, which then comes to answer the challenges of the times. The change also happens in education, religion, culture, and even performing arts, as found in Ludruk Armada's case. Even though there was a vacuum due to the pandemic, *ludruk* still exists by utilizing the YouTube channel by posting several video documentation of the performance so that the performing arts of *ludruk* can still be enjoyed by the public during the pandemic (Fitri, 2021). Started by these changes, then this was also experienced in meeting through Zoom in virtual events, with specific changes starting from the mobility of the joining participants and the orderly conditions when the event takes place. People use additional equipment to record and take videos, such as a cell phone camera or tripod, stabilizer, and even audio speakers (Manganti, 2021).

Some of these changes impact on the production in the form of modifications according to needs during an emergency. The disadvantage is that activities through virtual screens tend to present a reality that is not real. According to Baudrillard (2000), reality is not an absolute truth for the knowledge of everyone who analyzes based on their knowledge. Hyperreality raises many diverse falsehoods mixed with reality, including the relationship of time, which then merges into truth and falsehood. However, material needs to continue to change, and the COVID-19 pandemic has also revolutionized the change toward virtual culture. On the other side, there are still obstacles and an adaptation process that will not stop and continue to develop according to the needs of the times.

The obstacles result in obstacles to the adaptation process carried out by the community, who are not fully accustomed to virtual mode. Moreover, difficulties are experienced in remote areas far from public facilities. Thus, various efforts were made to adapt to these changes, although not optimally. The

same thing also happened to the Student Activity Unit of FCS UB, where they previously carried out completely offline activities. Specifically, before the pandemic, they carried out activities that accommodated students in the field of literature, especially in the field of writing, as well as film and other work review activities. The literary night event is held annually. The activities are in the form of poetry reading competitions intended for prospective members who want to register. There is also a performing arts organization conducted by the management of the Student Activity Unit to welcome these prospective members.

The phenomenon of COVID-19 certainly has a significant impact starting from changes in organizational structure and the form of activities or social values. In addition, material changes in organizational activities and literary night events also underwent adaptation. Especially during the pandemic, it is done to keep organizational activities going.

Moreover, WHO urged countries to immediately maximize the prevention of the growth of the increasingly spreading COVID-19 for the safety of each country (Ulfa & Mikdar, 2020). However, the speed of the spread of the virus does not rule out the possibility of changing patterns of community cultural action to adapt to the conditions of the times. Further, the government implemented a policy of working from home during the pandemic, resulting in massive virtual demand.

The relationship between cultural practice and interaction in the virtual form is based on the relationship regarding cultural materialism. This relationship is the cause of development variations affecting the position, society, and class related to the accommodation of these needs (Harris, 1979). In his view, Harris states that the existence of the mode of production impacts changes in the social structure that occur in society materially through actions achieved to meet these material needs (Yunita, 2017). The consumption of virtual space then accommodates the structure that occurs, especially in the organizational activities of the Matapena Student Activity Unit FCS UB

through WhatsApp and Zoom applications. The consumption of virtual space also affects how production goes according to material needs.

The changing relation patterns among actors and actresses in virtual performing art activities haven't been documented sufficiently. Therefore, the current study aimed at identifying changes in cultural ethics, adaptation process, and material changes happening among the persons involved in the performing arts. The urgency of this study is to see the changes in cultural materialism. It is seen from the materials used by the Student Activity Unit of Matapena of FCS UB for virtual spaces to accommodate adjustments in structural changes that occur, especially in organizational activities during the pandemic. Thus, this study investigates how this intertwining virtual relationships affects the actions and attitudes towards the cultural changes that occur, especially in the activities carried out by the Student Activity Unit of Matapena of FCS UB.

RESEARCH METHODS

In this research, the researcher examined relations in virtual performing arts in the literary night event of the Student Activity Unit of Matapena of FCS UB. The aspects studied are changes in cultural ethics, structural adaptation, and in aspects of material needs during the events in virtual spaces. The analysis used Marvin Harris's approach to the relationship between material culture changes and structural order.

This research used a nethnography to look at the relationships among actors and actresses in social media, generally the internet, to find out the culture of the people within it (Eriyanto, 2021). The platforms used were the WhatsApp application and Zoom. In-depth interviews were conducted to find out further interactions, especially with members and organizational management, to obtain information about the changes that occurred in activities in the virtual space. Thus, the data presented were detailed. In addition, the steps taken were making observations through the

Zoom meeting room in a series of activities and through the Whatsapp application for interviews related to the activity and taking notes which were then sent to the relevant interviewees.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The change in the material structure encourages each group activity in the surrounding environment to experience many presented transformations. This transformation is inseparable from a condition that influences each other, especially in the social order. The transformation particularly influenced the activities carried out by student organizations during the current pandemic. In addition, this is also inseparable from the meaning of each production of the activities carried out. Thus, the elements of sacredness also influence the phenomenon of this development. The cultural analysis presentation will be explained related to the development and meaning of the student organization of the Student Activity Unit of Matapena of FCS UB, which is one of the active Student Activity Units working in the field of literature, including writing. Virtual spaces then illustrate how access and structural changes within the organization undergo digital transformation in the regeneration and training activities carried out. This study will also observe how the organization continues to run in virtual conditions, which impacts changes in cultural ethics, cultural adaptation, and material needs during activities in the virtual space.

Changes in Cultural Ethics

In the philosophical view, ethics is an attempt by humans to investigate how the relationship between behavior and obligations for humans is seen as a consideration of virtue and vice that is presented in the reality of life (Prajna, 2020). Ethics is also defined as a clear stance on a problem concerning the morals of each human being (Suseno, 1989). In the context of changes in cultural ethics during the pandemic, most student activities are carried out in their respective homes. Academic activities and online lectures also significantly

changed the existing structure. The adaptation pattern carried out by students experiencing the modification stage using virtual technology has now become a permanent policy within the internal organization. The adaptation became a new challenge, especially for members of the Student Activity Unit of Matapena of FCS UB during the management transition during the pandemic period.

Moreover, the adaptation was strengthened by the government's policy enacting the distance learning system in every university. Consequently, the problems and obstacles faced by the organizational structure also experienced rapid development, mainly because some of them carried out online activities. It ignited the innovation of efficient organizational management. During the cadre selection in the Student Activity Unit of Matapena, little was done offline, primarily online. However, this had a negative impact occurred in general. After the pandemic, online activities will leave a traumatic shadow on the psychological side. The unexpected impact is a decline in humanist moral attitudes within virtual spaces as a result of the new adaptation (Sonis et al., 2020). Therefore, the campus organizational system followed the instructions from Rector regarding the policies implemented.

Provisions regarding online implementation activities also certainly influence the interwoven social interaction process. The process was mainly on building a dialogical relationship, although some participants prefer to be in a closed state when going through the screen. This behavior contradicts the order of norms which causes the narrowing of social relations between participants and the committee.

However, some relationships limited the movement of each participant or committee that did not directly supervise the ongoing activities. There were efforts made by the organizing committee to keep the event lively even though there were nuances of the relationship that was not so close to the participants; one example was expecting participants to wear a virtual background.

It is then understood that the media is interpreted differently by the subject amid current developments. This interpretation of media follows what was conveyed by Marvin Harris that a need depends on and adapts to the community environment itself (Harris, 1979). Therefore, the behavior strengthens the idea of material needs demand and adapts to existing developments.

Adaptation Process

In the adaptation process carried out during the implementation of the training, there was a change in the Student Activity Unit of Matapena of FCS UB. The change had an impact on the structure of the series of performing art events. It did not rule out the possibility of material needs that were not significant enough, like offline meetings in general, even though there were so many impacts that all students with these changes then perceived. Especially in adaptation efforts virtually in the process of activities carried out, the material needs were significant. Efforts were also made to run the virtual process nicely. Even so, the changing pattern of virtual adaptation was undoubtedly inseparable from the influence of previous cultural patterns that also affected cultural adaptation (Utami, 2015). The forms of modification (adaptation) to the structure emerged through the efforts of coordinating each committee member and the participants. It also directly adapted to the virtual meeting process's conditions and needs. Deliana Putri expressed the modification that in the initial series of literary night events, the committee urged participants to be able to activate the camera during the event. However, the committee allowed participants to turn off the camera for those unable to do so. The committee also provided an opportunity to ask questions, especially in the chat inbox, which was used for participants to be courageous and active in expressing opinions while at the same time opening a free discussion session when the event was over.

Regarding the change in the structure of the virtual meeting, it was pretty helpful, especially for students who could not follow the

agenda directly. A communication process between participants and the committee needs to be developed because many obstacles were encountered considering implementing the event using virtual meetings. The obstacles were especially for students from outside Java because prospective members and their administrators were not together in one specific place. The internal officials hold to control the adjustments.

The development of cultural patterns is increasing, and the impact of the pandemic has also affected the communication process. Technological developments, especially the existence of virtual meetings, greatly affected and had an impact physically and psychologically on the social environment (Selvia, 2021). Consequently, it is necessary to carry out the adaptation gradually with efforts that minimize the existence of the virtual space.

In addition, the performing art event also held a performance competition. The offline performing art event was carried out on stage, and all participants and the jury could see it to assess the participants' performance. In organizing the online event in virtual spaces, the committee only asked participants to submit a video of the poetry reading performance. Therefore, while organizing the online performing art event, the committee only sent the video to the jury. There was a tight space between other participants and the committee enjoying the performance. In addition, the performance might be shown during activities in the virtual space.

Material Changes

As the activities were performed in the virtual space, the challenges the campus organizational members faced led to material needs in virtual conditions. The needs were different from the material needs before the pandemic, and the differences affected the organization's structure, especially in the organization of a series of cadres of prospective members. Therefore, social media was necessary and cannot be separated from the implementation process.

The difference occurred during and before the pandemic in the Student Activity Unit of Matapena of FCS UB. During the pandemic, social media was significantly needed to introduce campus organizational activities to prospective members. Instagram was used to upload videos and posters to provide information about the poetry reading competition that was being held. Before the pandemic, social media was needed as a tool that was quite helpful, but that did not mean that social media was a material need and had become an important one. Social media has become significant during the current pandemic, especially in organizing performing art events.

The modifications in the pandemic did not necessarily mean that they changed substantial aspects of the event from offline to online, but rather as an adjustment to the needs. Due to these needs, the committee has different material needs. The main changes happened in the needs of each division. First, the equipment division. Before the pandemic, the necessities during the performing art activities were chairs, sound systems, banners, and lighting lamps. The main equipment was the stage for the performance and some other additional equipment. There was also a change in material needs as they switched to the virtual room. The committee only required an available zoom meeting room. Other than that, they prepared recorded videos to document the performance of each participant participating in these activities. In the offline setting, the committee prepared all the needs, including costumes for the participants. Conversely, in the online setting, the committee did not ask for synchronous/live performances. Therefore, as was explained in an interview with Deliana Putri, in organizing performances for participants, the participants were only required to send videos of their performances. The other modification here was the modification in administrative material, which was shifted to social media. There was also a decrease in the budget from the prior offline activities. In the offline activities, the budgeting included inviting the judges and preparing an accountability report of the event, which

was deleted for the online events. The other modifications were the modification on the internet package assistance for the juries and the committee based on a mutual decision.

For the platform used for this virtual space, the Student Activity Unit of Matapena of FCS UB usually used Google Meet when holding meetings to discuss technical issues in the organization of the performing art events. This was different from the performing art event that usually used Zoom meeting rooms. It was because the performing art event had many features available and easy to use even though the committee had to pay for the subscription. Although Google Meet was free to use, it had limited features for the performance event, so the committee only used it for several regular meetings.

From the discussion, it can be seen that the role of the economy becomes significant in material needs, especially in the pattern of digital space utilization. In this digital era, the symbol of money is increasingly shifting to a production value carried out by each particular group. Schmidt emphasized that we cannot completely ignore the function of money, which is increasingly changing following the economic value. In the other side, in economic psychology, money can adapt from various kinds of goods that give a broad meaning but are only limited to the use-value of the item (Simmel, 1978). Therefore, the existence of a structure of the economic order influences subjects who consume these goods so that they have more value, especially in today's technological developments. Distribution is inherent and integrated with information technology that helps each other in every need that continues to grow in its use (Dani, et al., 2006). Thus, it can be seen that this progress of modification/ changes in the pandemic time supports economic values.

CONCLUSION

Online or virtual media is one of the technologies used in current issues during the pandemic. The ongoing changes with the pandemic that resulted in the mass use of vir-

tual spaces also changed the organizational structure in the materialistic aspects, as in this case the one that happened to the Student Activity Unit of Matapena of FCS UB. The changes started from the shift in social ethics and other adaptations, from the continual consumption process to material needs. The changes also occurred through the usage the virtual spaces to carry out communication activities as a form of efficiency and adaptation efforts in mitigating the pandemic. A new structure was found that showed differences from the prior pandemic structure.

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