



Innovation and Creativity of Indonesian Musicians during the Covid-19 Pandemic

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Received 22 February 2022; accepted 18 May 2022; published 28 July 2022

ABSTRACT

Pandemic Covid has widespread in Indonesia since early 2020 resulting in some artistic activities paralysis. In performing arts artist are banned to make crowd, direct contact between individuals, and to travel to other cities. This causes musicians to loose opportunity to perform on the stage. To fill the void some groups of musicians find a way to make music by using digital platforms. Some of the virtual activities are: Virtual Live Music Concert, Virtual Tapping Music Concert, Drive-in Music Concert, Virtual Online Music Class, and Podjam among musicians. These have revolved in keeping the creative process among musicians in their homeland.

KEYWORDS

pandemic covid,
digital platform,
virtual concert,
creativity in music.

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1. Introduction

Quoted from several media in the late 2019, a virus called coronavirus (Covid-19) had broken out in China especially in Wuhan area. According to Anne Kerr (2004), this disease had caused people anxious and fearful. In Januari 2020 *World Health Organization* (WHO) said that the world was in global emergency resulted from covid-19 (Sembayang, 2020). Several anticipation and preventive actions were done not exceptionally in Indonesia.

In Indonesia covid-19 broke out rather late compared with other countries. This disease had been confirmed in Indonesia in Januari 2020, but the bacteria had spread rapidly in the community. On April 21, 2020 Satgas (special team for the Covid virus) said that in this country 6.760 people had been infected, with 590 of mortality and 747 people was recovered from the disease. For that reason, the Indonesian government made some strategies to prevent from the virus transmission, one of them was a policy called Pembatasan Sosial Berskala Besar (PSBB, Large-scale social restrictions).

This policy had caused confusion among citizens resulting in chaos in many cities. Their income was declined, holding and investment was suddenly dropped, and entertainment industry had been broken. Of course, this affected some elements of community life. One of the affected sector was music industry. Many of these musicians stay at home to maintain their health and to help the transmission Covid-19 decreased. Erix Soekamti, the singer of renown Endang Sukamti Band, said that now musicians life “abnormally” because they have to stay at home, keep distance with others, and to maintain their health. This has restricted the artistic activity and confined the musicians’ opportunity to perform. However, at the same time they have to be active and innovative to respond to all of the conditions such as the one that happened nowadays.

One of the serious challenges is the digital era that needs creative thinking and innovative creation. We, as musicians, have to be aware of the effect of digitalization and the royalty system to the life of music. We cannot imagine that almost 90% of musicians’ program and production of music industry have been postponed. Some of the performances have also been cancelled because of the pandemic issue. Data from Koalisi Seni Indonesia (Indonesian Art Association) in March 2020 said that there were about 40 the scheduled music *tours*, *concerts*, and *festivals* have been postponed and many of them had been cancelled. For that reason, musicians have to be survived by



using strategy of innovation and be creative to adapt the new situation. They have to work even if they have to stay at home temporarily.

Research on music education, performance, technical and organology had been conducted by scholars previously, but none of them focused on social and cultural aspects of the efforts of Indonesian musicians in the development of innovation and creativity of music industry in the Covid-19 pandemic era. So far, Dadang D.S (2020) analyzed the musical cultural change of the Covid-19 pandemic in which he explored the general phenomena of the issue. Puji Hastuti (2020) also explained about the dynamic change of music industry ecosystem in Indonesia in that era resulting the communality of the phenomena in that social restriction mentioned before. Different from Eka Titi H. (2021) in her article she discussed the issue of musical communication in Covid-19 pandemic situation. Other investigations analyzed the change of musicians' activities and music industry in the pandemic era such as those done by Theodora Sinaga dan Suharyanto (2020). These researches have also enriched the knowledge of social and cultural aspects of the topic, perspective, and the problems of pandemic issue.

2. Method

The procedure in this research is based qualitative method focusing on the principle of phenomenology in which the source of data of "interpretation" in the form of texts of the social life and experience of the object. Analysis of the research in this article is based on "horisonization" that is the researcher attempts to investigate data by highlighting important statement of the informants to provide basic understanding of the phenomena. However, most of the analysis are written by using the strategy of *Work From Home (WFH)* procedure, in which the writer observes and writes the article from home. This is in accordance with the PSBB that is the government policy cited in handbill number 36603/A.A5/OT/2020 dated March 25, 2020. However, the writer also obtained some data by using direct contact with informants. Some article used in the analysis were those from internet, news sites, e-journal, and audio-visual media platform called *youtube*.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Musicians affected by Covid-19 Pandemic.

Some information on the cancelation, reduction, and withdrawal of music performances came about after the government announced the regulation of *social distancing*. This regulation is called PSBB mentioned earlier, in which crowd was banned. This was done to minimize covid-19 transmission in Indonesia. This was effective since April 2020. No matter how good was for the safety of the community, the music industry sector was affected with negative impact of this phenomena. Most of the music industry at that time was terribly damaged. Many musicians and artists expressed their concerns on mass media.

Not only musicians in national level who suffered from this issue but also local musicians who perform in café, wedding, indie groups were also seriously damaged by the pandemic effects. Many of them complained this situation in social media. Those who protested this issue were singers, musicians, music crew, road manager, and other professionals who work for music performances. From these grievances the government of Indonesia started to tackle the problem of music industry in Indonesia. That is why, some of the musicians nation-wide got invitation from the President of Indonesia (Joko Widodo) to discuss this issue in the State Palace on July 17, 2020. This invitation (to meet at the State Palace) was the goodwill of the government to find solution of the polemic in that music industry in Indonesia. In addition, this is meant to help the musicians to support the financial problem especially in the covid-19 period.

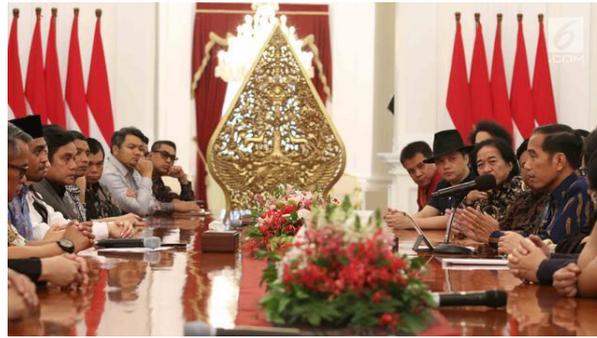


Figure 1. The meeting between the President of Indonesia Joko Widodo and musicians of Indonesia at the State House, Jakarta (source: Liputan6.com)

Many of Indonesian musicians find another way to earn money for their income. Income from these business was not sufficient for their need. Some musicians can survive by selling some products such as food, clothing, musical instruments, to make “content” of digital platform program such as *youtube*, *spotify*, *joox*, *instagram*, and so on.

3.2 The challenge of music Industry in the covid-19 pandemic era

The Pandemic disease had affected many musicians in the world. Quoted from a survey done by *The Musician Union*, 90% of the respondents were suffered from the covid-19 that influenced their income. Also, according *New Musical Express* (NME) about 30% of the musicians had resigned from music industry because of the pandemic issue. The minimum support from the government resulted in the art workers and especially musicians to quit from the industry due to the shortage of their income. Also, a survey from Federasi Serikat Musisi Indonesia (FESMI, Indonesian Musicians Federation) said that 43% of musicians lost their “off-air jobs” as the main source of income in the family and many of them had been cancelled. Thus, people in music industry think that this situation is a challenge to make innovation to find alternative programs to remain survive in this difficult situation.

On the other hand, the implementation of PSBB had also resulted in bad situation in music industry in Indonesia. All of the people’s activities were stopped because they were not allowed to make crowd and the government suggested that they stay at home to avoid covid-19 infections. Based on the advice the community were asked to stay productive and at the same time obey the rule of social activity restriction. Other activities than health sectors and food distribution were not allowed until future notice. That regulation had been strictly reinforced since the virus pandemic had been significantly increased in Indonesia. Surprisingly, many scheduled music performances and programs had been cancelled some of them without any compensation. Singers, musicians, groups of band, had been shocked with these sudden change and many of them lost their jobs. The following are samples of lists of performances that were called off.

Table 1. Lists of music tours and concerts that had been cancelled

No	Music Conserts dan Tours	Dates
1.	Music Concert Anji, Lapangan Merdeka Ambon	March 14, 2020
2.	Rumah Kaca eEffect, Kalibata City, Jakarta	March 15, 2020



3.	Manu Chao Concert, M Bloc Space, Jakarta	March 19, 2020
4.	Zeke and The Popo, UG Kuningan City, Jakarta	March 20, 2020
5.	Septian Dwi Cahyo 40 Tahun Berkarya Performance, M Bloc Space, Jakarta	March 22, 2020
6.	Hammersonic, Pantai Karnaval Ancol, Jakarta	March 27-28, 2020
7.	Lalala Festival 2020, Orchid Forest, Cikole Lembang, Bandung	April 18-19, 2020
8.	We The Fest 2020, Jakarta	April 14-16, 2020
9.	Synchronize Fest, Jakarta	October 2-4, 2020

Source: adapted from [kompas.com](https://www.kompas.com), 2020b; instagram account @mblocspace, 2020; Haryanto, 2020

Digital technology was the only means for musicians to continue working in music industry without having direct contact with viewers and audiences. As known, many media or digital platform can be used to gain income. One of the most familiar is *Youtube*. *Youtube* is one of the digital media in the form of visual audio in various categories such as *daily vlog*, news, music, comedy, education, film, sports, and trending (the program that is popular *booming*). Then, how can musicians earn income from this platform. The emersion of ads either in the form of product of merit broadcasted in the channel or the owner of the account multiplied by the number of viewers in the aired video program. In addition, *Youtube* also gain income from *endorsement*, *affiliate marketing* (the cooperation between *Youtube* and companies promoting a product or a brand), and the product sale or services. From these categories musicians are competing to make program content in the form of *daily musician life*, new single song launching, music podcast, long distance music collaboration, and many others.

Digital media becomes the best strategy in music industry to deal with challenges in the covid-19 pandemic situation. Even so, the digitalization era also raised a problem for musicians that is the copyright and royalty to the owner of the music. This had become an issue in that community because of the popularity of musicians that make use of other musicians. This was thought of as the weak enforcement of government to implement the regulation in digital media era. Even if this matter has been cited in UU (Constitution) Number 28, 2014 on Hak Cipta (Copyright), many musicians still ignore it and some break the law.

The digital era had provided opportunity and freedom for musicians to perform other work of art that is popular at that time. They can *reinterpretate*, cover, and make new composition of other musicians. Some people say that this is commonly done in public space in this digital era. Not surprisingly, some new artists try to make their debut using *cover version* in the hope of obtaining success and popularity.

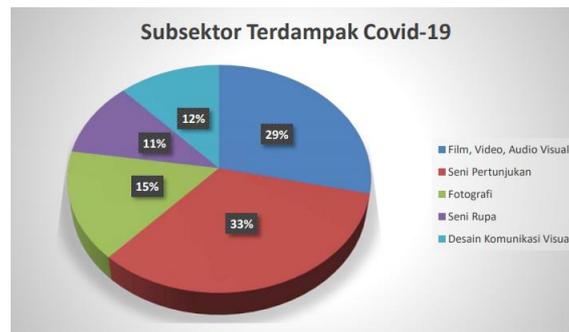


Chart 1. Subsectors affected by covid-19
(source: Serikat Pekerja Media dan Industri Kreatif untuk Demokrasi)

3.3 Covid-19 pandemic atmosphere triggers musicians to create innovation and creative work in music industry sector

The difficult situation does not discourage the passion of the musicians to be active and creative in music industry in the pandemic era. Quoted from Kementerian Pariwisata dan Ekonomi Kreatif (Kemenparekraf, the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy) that the Covid-19 pandemic phenomena had widespread almost all over Indonesia resulting in the profound effect for the music industry workers, especially reduction of opportunity to perform live show. Various ways and forms of performances had been reformatted either with distance in hall or in the format of distance show.

The restriction, procrastination, and cancellation do not dismay the passion of the musicians to produce music performances. These had motivated them to be more creative and innovative in creating music and making concepts of performances. Digital platform becomes the only choice to perform in pandemic era. The following are the creative and innovative works among the music workers in Indonesia.

3.3.1. *Virtual Live Music Concert*



Figure 2. Charity concert at Didi Kempot's house (source: caping.co.id)

This concept is a performance that combines live audio-visual broadcast through television and digital platform. There are 2 kinds of productions of this performance, that are recording in one room and that in separate room in which recording is held in each musician's place. However, the second type of recording is less preferable because they experience technical problems especially in dealing with the stability of network and the different media they use in the recording. This results in the quality of the music broadcast and performances. For that reason, many music concert promoters use the concept of recording in *one room* with strict compliance with the health protocol of the covid-19 pandemic regulation. To do this they sterilize the concert room by spraying disinfectant, test each musicians and crews by Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) and then perform in 3M (*mencuci tangan, memakai*



masker, dan menjaga jarak, to wash hand, use mask, and to keep distance with others). The music concerts that uses this concept are:

1. Charity concert at Didi Kempot's house, April 11, 2020.
2. Shynchronize Festival, November 14, 2020.
3. Prambanan Jazz Festival, July 2, 3, 4, 2020
4. Concert WIB (Waktu Indonesia Belanja) Tokopedia, July 29, and November 25, 2020.
5. Smartfren WOW Virtual Concert, August 8, 2020
6. And many others.

3.3.2. *Virtual Tapping Music Concert*

This concept is a broadcast of performances that have been recorded and edited in advance and is broadcasted on the scheduled date. Technically, it is almost the same as *virtual live music concert*. The only different is that this program is recorded before it is performed on air. The day of recording and that of broadcasting are not at the same time making the latter delay in time.

Many of music performances were done using *Virtual Tapping* considering that they can manage the recording as perfect as possible. This is preferable because by using this method they can broadcast the best quality they want it. In addition to be able to *take again* (to take the best recording) technically it takes less effort and energy in the production process. So, the virtual *tapping performance* will become interesting, have high quality, and it has less mistake and technical obstacles.



Figure 3. We The Fest 2020 Success in Virtual Home Edition Performance
(source: ussfeed.com)

The following are some music concerts and performances in Indonesia using the concept of *Virtual Tapping*:

- 1) Kotak Band-Sound to Screen, February 27, 2021 (Rich Music) using *Youtube* platform
- 2) Gigi Band-One Fest, February 26, 2021 on playOne *Youtube* channel
- 3) Hivi Band concert in the event of "Ceritera di suasana Baru" on Hivi *Youtube* channel, on August 8, 2020
- 4) We the Fest "Kunto Aji" Virtual Home Edition, September 30, 2020 on Indonesian Musician *Youtube* channel
- 5) And many more.



a. *Drive-in Music Concert*



Figure 4: Konser Drive-In performed in Semarang (Foto: Angling Adhitya Purbaya)

Various innovation using digital platform have been invented in the covid-19 pandemic era. One of them is the *off air* music concert that is meant for viewers who is driving a car at the time of performance. This is called *drive-in music concert*. This concept was initiated when the government enforced the social restriction rule by implementing the health protocol. This did not prevent the musicians to perform for the audiences and viewers in restricted space.

This concept was first held in the capital city Jakarta. The creator was *Berlian Entertainment* that made collaboration with *Mata Elang Productions* and supported by Mahaka Radio Integra (MARI). These three groups become the pioneers of and they were milestone of performances in pandemic era. The first performance using *drive-in* method was “Danamon Optimal New Live! Experience”. Some of Indonesian musician such as Kahitna, Afgan Syahreza, dan Armand Maulana were the guest starts of the event.

The following were music concerts using *drive-in* concept:

- 1) Z-PROJECT Drive In Concert Serial held on October 25, 2020 with Tulus at Stadion Akuatik Center Gelora Bung Karno Stadium (GBK), Senayan, Jakarta
- 2) Mahkota Drive In Charity Concert in 2020 at PRPP (Pusat Rekreasi dan Promosi Pembangunan), Kota Semarang with Jikustik, Soulgroove Band, and YLB
- 3) Bali Revival Drive In Music Concert 2020 held at Monkey Forest, Ubud, Bali supported by local bands from Bali such as Lolot, Navicula, Di Ubud, Balawan, The Hydrant, Dialog Dini Hari, Jun Bintang, Dek Ulik, and Manja grup.
- 4) And many others.

b. *Virtual Online Music Class*

Since the covid-19 pandemic afflicted Indonesia, many activities of people were restricted. Commercial, transportation, and art sectors were also affected by this situation. Due to the strict regulation not to gather in group the learning process either formal (in schools, campuses, and others) and non-formal education (music courses, tutoring services, etc) were required to conduct their activities at home. They are asked to conduct online or virtual system. This became problematic in the community considering that many people believe that virtual activities did not represent the good method of education.

Many art workers especially musicians get familiar with the bad situation and they started to create new activity to replace direct-contact activities. They intended to use digital media. Publications, productions, and performances were held by using online system. From this time they intended to change the learning process from offline to the online concept.



Figure 5: Music Class Online Course (source: Kelas Musik Youtube Channel)

Although many people experience obstacles, this does not lessen the spirit of the students to study the music using this online system. Not only did local musicians use this method, musicians in national level also implement the concept of *virtual online music class* either as music player or session player. Many of them hold music class virtually in that pandemic time.

Some of the learning methods are also having troubles with some factors such as:

- 1) Internet connection that is unstable in Indonesia.
- 2) Students who do not have music instrument at home.
- 3) Laziness factor due to the busy schedule.
- 4) Family financial factor affected by the pandemic issue.

These issues challenged teachers to find solution of the learning process. Parents, government, students attempted to make the learning process happened so that they could continue to educate students like those happened in “normal situation”. Obstacles exist in that situation but they wanted that students did not stop studying in this difficult situation.

The following are lists of music lessons using online method in formal and informal institutions:

- 1) Purwa Tjaraka Purwa Caraka Music Studio (PCMS)
- 2) Online Class with Indra Aziz
- 3) Masterclass Virtual bersama Ade avery (session player Isyana Sarasvati, Afgan, Rossa, and others)
- 4) Masterclass with Dwiki Dharmawan
- 5) And many others.

c. *Podjam or Podcast among musicians*



Figure 6: Drum Class with Master Ray Prasetya (source: playboard.co)

Podcast or often called radio broadcast is a process of sharing knowledge and experience, conduct dialogues, and have chat on specific hot issues. However, today this concept has been combined with audio visual strategy that is a broadcast of audio visual in several platforms. The most popular digital media is *Youtube*, *Spotify*, and *Joox* apps. These three platforms provide space to broadcast programs and introduce single or album.



One of the social gathering (silaturahmi) and meeting is called podcast in which the content creator invites local or national level of inspiring figure through podcast program. Like Podjam, an interesting content initiated Rio Alief (the drummer of Noah Band) to combine between podcast and jam session. According to Alief, innovation and creative process in conceptualizing virtual program using podcast is wide ranging and it is free to innovate programs. However, musicians have to follow the health protocol reinforced by the government agencies.

The following are some channels used by musicians using the podcast and podjam music platforms.

- 1) 'Podjam' from youtube channel of Rio Alif presenting musiscians session player up to player in grup in national level.
- 2) "Cigutu Ajeh Vlogs Sharing" from youtube channel of Ibrani Pandean that speaks to audiences and viewers to share experiences in music performances.
- 3) And many others.

4. Conclusion

From the discussion it is concluded that the covid-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021 had caused all of the economic and social activities obstructed and many people struggle in this situation. Various restrictions and regulations of health protocols have been reinforced by the government in all of the Indonesian areas. The main goal was to protect the community from covid-19 virus transmission.

One of the sectors seriously affected by the pandemic was creative economy especially music industry in Indonesia. According to a survey held by Federasi Serikat Musisi Indonesia (Fesmi) 43% of the musicians were affected and many of them lost their jobs because many *offair* programs had been cancelled. However, music industry workers thought that this situation was not a stumbling block for their career rather it is a trigger to create alternative method to continue working in their vulnerable condition. This strengthened their motivation to prevent them from deep effects of the pandemic disaster.

Social constraints during the pandemic attacks, restriction, delay, and cancelation of music shows did not disappoint them but they made endeavor to keep the life of music took place. They forced the musicians to be more creative to make new music performances and the concept of the show. Digital technology in various platform became the only means of music presentation during the challenging conditions. Off-air performances could be done in certain circumstance with strict health protocol regulation. There are 5 kinds of innovation in dealing with the situation: *Virtual Live Music Concert* (live music concert at one time and space through audio-visual digital media platform), *Virtual Tapping Music Concert* (music performances through editing process and upload them to airing in any time), *Drive-in Music Concert* (*offair* music concert for viewers in their own cars), *Virtual Music Class* (online music lesson using various platforms such as zoom, google meet, and so on), and Podjam or podcast among musicians.

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