



ASIAN COMMUNICATION EXPERIENCE IN THE MID OF CORONA PANDEMIC

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Abstract

This research is motivated by case that is happening right now, where the world is being hit by a virus called covid-19, this virus started in Wuhan, China. The spread of the Covid-19 virus which has reached 226 countries has caused the death toll to continue to rise. To date, the total number of Covid-19 cases worldwide stands at 505 million cases with a death toll of 6 million. Various efforts have been made by the government together with the medical team to find ways to stop virus Covid-19. One of them is by creating a vaccine that is considered capable of reducing the death rate caused by the Covid-19. Asia, as the region that was first affected by this virus and is considered the area where the Covid-19 virus emerged, certainly brings a lot of speculation and opinion from other countries. This is what is then felt by Asian students who continue their education abroad, one of which is in Egypt. Of course this has an impact on the communication experience they feel during this pandemic due to their status as students who come from countries in Asia. The purpose of this study was to determine the interpersonal communication experience experienced by Asian students who are currently in Egypt as an area affected by COVID-19. The method used in this research is qualitative with a phenomenological approach. The data collection technique used is interviews. The data analysis technique uses the Miles and Huberman interactive model analysis. And the data validity technique in this study uses source triangulation. The results of the study showed that there were unpleasant experiences experienced by Asian students where they were discriminated against as Asian and accused of causing the corona virus in Egypt. The forms of treatment received by the Asian students included being quipped when they were in public places such as on roads, markets or shopping centers. Then ridiculed sarcastically (roughly) as Corona in a public place, shunned when in public transportation and shopping centre and not even served when in food stores.

Keywords: *Experience, Interpersonal Communication, Student, Asia, Covid-19*

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INTRODUCTION

Corona viruses are a large family of viruses that cause disease in humans and animals. In humans, it usually causes respiratory tract infections, ranging from the common cold to serious illnesses such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). A new type of coronavirus found in humans since an extraordinary event appeared in Wuhan China, in December 2019 (Kementerian Kesehatan, 2021).

Based on data from Epidemiology showed that 66% of patients were related or exposed to a seafood market or live market in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China, December 2019. Then samples from patients were studied with the results showing infection with coronavirus, a new type of betacoronavirus, which was named 2019 novel coronavirus (2019-nCov). On February 11, 2020, the World Health Organization named the new virus Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus-2 (SARS-CoV-2) and the name of the disease as Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) (Yuliana, 2020).

Coronavirus is a positive single-strain RNA virus, encapsulated and unsegmented. Coronavirus belongs to the order Nidovirales, family Coronaviridae. The structure of the coronavirus forms a cube-like structure with the S protein located on the surface of the virus. S protein or spike protein is one of the main viral antigen proteins and is the main structure for gene writing. This S protein plays a role in the attachment and entry of the virus into host cells (interaction of protein S with its receptors on the host cell). Coronavirus is sensitive to heat. Most coronaviruses infect animals and circulate in animals. Coronaviruses cause a large number of diseases in animals and their ability to cause severe disease in animals such as pigs, cattle, horses, cats and chickens. Coronaviruses are called zoonotic viruses, which are viruses that are transmitted from animals to humans. Many wild animals can carry pathogens and act as vectors for certain infectious diseases. Bats, bamboo rats, camels and civets are common hosts for the Coronavirus. Coronavirus in bats is the main source for the incidence of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and Middle East respiratory syndrome (Yuliana, 2020).

COVID-19 can attack anyone, such as the elderly (older groups), adults, children and infants, including pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers. COVID-19 infection can cause mild, moderate or severe symptoms. Corona virus can cause mild disorders of the

respiratory system, severe lung infections, and even death (Pittara, 2022).

The mode of spread of COVID-19 in general can be through splashing the saliva of an infected person (infected person), touching the hands or face of an infected person, touching the eyes, nose or mouth after handling items that have been splashed by the infected person's saliva (Fadli, 2021).

The main clinical symptoms that appear from COVID-19 are fever (temperature $>38^{\circ}\text{C}$), cough and difficulty breathing. In addition, it can be accompanied by severe shortness of breath, fatigue, myalgia, gastrointestinal symptoms such as diarrhea and other respiratory symptoms. Half of patients develop shortness of breath within one week. In severe cases rapidly and progressively worsens, such as ARDS, septic shock, uncorrected metabolic acidosis and bleeding or coagulation system dysfunction within a few days. In some patients, symptoms appear mild, not even accompanied by fever. Most patients have a good prognosis, with a minority in critical condition or even death.

The virus, which originally came from Wuhan, then spread to various countries, from data released by Google, it was stated that until April 20, 2022, the total cases of the COVID-19 virus were 505 million cases with a death toll of 6.2 million cases. Today alone there has been a spike in cases of 470 thousand cases (Google, 2022). Responding to this problem, medical personnel and government in each country did not remain silent. Many things have been done to reduce the spread of the Covid-19 virus, including limiting visits for foreign tourists who come from areas with the highest cases of Covid-19 and working together to find a suitable vaccine to eradicate Covid-19. The efforts made by the medical team in eradicating Covid-19 have not been in vain, this is evidenced by the discovery of a number of vaccines that are considered capable of dealing with Covid-19, including Sinovac, Pfizer, Astrazaneca and many more. The state has also begun to implement a policy for its citizens to vaccinate, this is done so that Covid-19 is quickly resolved. However, it turned out all of these things still need to be fought for again, based on the latest news related to Covid-19, this virus continues to adapt and is growing. It is known that currently the Covid-19 Virus has developed into a new variant called Omicron.

This new variant of Covid-19 was first detected in Africa. This variant is referred to as one that is very fast in transmitting the virus (KPCPEN/RDJS/YRM, 2021). Omicron is known to spread more quickly and is at risk of infecting

people who have been infected with the Corona virus before, this is because the antibodies from the vaccine decrease over time. Plus, in this Omicron variant there is a strong mutation that infects people who have decreased immune systems (InfoSehat FKUI, 2022).

The entry of the new variant of the Covid-19 virus has made the spread of Covid-19 in the world soar again. Based on the news released by ANTARA, a number of countries experienced an increase in cases due to the omicron variant. In Asia-Pacific, countries experiencing an increase in cases such as China and Australia. China experienced a spike in cases at the end of 2021, China sees this as the highest weekly case since successfully overcoming the Covid-19 outbreak almost two years ago. Then there is Australia, the country hit a record with more than 37,000 new cases. Furthermore, the Middle East and Africa, several countries in the region also experienced an increase in cases, recorded in the last two days already reaching 2500 cases in Qatar and Kuwait. Meanwhile in Europe, several countries such as France reported 271,686 new cases (Santoso, 2022).

The corona virus (COVID-19) is quite worrying for citizens of the world, including in Egypt. Many people have become paranoid due to the massive spread of the virus. Coupled with the news of the victim, including the death of the sufferer. Looking at the behavior of the world community, also in Egypt, it is undeniable that the corona virus is a dangerous disease outbreak (Sodikin, 2020).

Another similar study related to communication and the corona pandemic was carried out by Susanne Dida with the title Representation of Indonesia research on handling Covid-19 in foreign media. The results showed that Indonesia's poor image and reputation, which began with the weakness of public statements made by the Indonesian government, which had an effect on unfavorable perceptions formed from the news in the following months (Dida, Damayanti, & Koswara, 2021).

The next similar article related to the communication experience of Asians was written by Helier Cheung, et al and published on BBC News, The content of the news tells how East Asians living in America get sentiments from Native Americans, they get treated both verbally and non-verbally the displeasing of the Americans themselves. Like the following statement:

“When Corona broke out in America and killed more than 100,000 people, it made Asians the target of sentiment in America. We have experienced various unpleasant treatments, such as being pushed and shouted at by several people at shopping places, being asked to stay away from them (Cheung, Feng, & Deng, 2020).

The widespread and rapid spread of the COVID-19 virus has forced a number of countries to issue Lockdown policies or prohibit a number of tourists from areas with the highest rates of COVID-19 cases from entering their countries. Coupled with the spread of news about COVID-19 which has now appeared with the latest variant, even because the COVID-19 Virus originally came from the Asian Region, it is not uncommon to discriminate against Asian citizens who are overseas. For example, students who study abroad.

Moreover, COVID-19 is still an endless polemic. Based on the latest news related to COVID-19, which was released by Kompas, the WHO stated that the Covid-19 tsunami was occurring due to a new variant. In fact, according to an AFP tally, there have been 6.55 million cases of Covid-19 reported globally over the past seven days, indicating an unprecedented spread (Iswara, 2021).

Based on the description of the background that has been explained, the researchers are interested in researching Covid 19 from the point of view of communication science, because in this study no one has done more in-depth research on this outbreak, so it is a challenge for researchers to study it in the social sciences. In addition, by studying the Covid 19 phenomenon in various multidisciplinary sciences, it is hoped that the right steps or methods will be obtained in overcoming the developing problems, especially those related to Covid 19.

In this study, the authors took the subject of research are Asian students who are currently studying in Egypt. Egypt is one of the countries that is a priority destination for students who want to continue their education, especially in the field of religion. Many of them are countries in Asia such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, Brunei and so on who choose Egypt as their destination country to continue their education. It is recorded that for the State of Indonesia itself based on the latest data in 2020 there are 5 thousand Indonesian students who are currently studying in Egypt (Insani, 2020).

Meanwhile, the current conditions in Egypt, where Egypt imposed strict restrictions at the beginning of the pandemic, by closing the airspace and implementing a curfew to combat the spread of the COVID-19 virus (Sari, 2021). Reporting from the Our World In Data website, the number of COVID-19 cases in Egypt to date has reached 512 thousand cases with the number of deaths totaling 24 thousand cases (Google, 2022).

The reason the researchers chose these subjects was because they were vulnerable to intimidation and discrimination from the Egyptian people who were the original people there because this epidemic originally came from Asia. The term related to the existence of openly criminality and discrimination experienced by Asian students in Egypt is called xenophobia.

The purpose of this study was to find out the communication experiences experienced by Asian students who were in Egypt with the covid 19 outbreak. Specifically related to interpersonal communication between students from Asian countries and natives from Egypt.

The theoretical benefits of this research are that this research is expected to be able to contribute or input information for the development of the study of the discipline of Communication Science, especially relating to the study of interpersonal communication. Practically, this research is expected to provide an understanding for the general public to be wiser in responding to this outbreak.

METHODOLOGY

The research method chosen is a qualitative research method which generally aims to gain an understanding of reality through inductive thinking processes. Another definition was also presented by Bogdan and Taylor who stated that qualitative research is a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people and observable behavior. Qualitative research is used to explain the phenomenon as deeply as possible (Kriyantono, 2014). Qualitative research with descriptive analysis presentation to obtain objective conclusions.

In this study, the researcher was not involved in the situation and setting of the phenomenon under study. To reveal and explain the phenomenon of the COVID-19 outbreak on the experiences of Asian students in Egypt from their own point of view, this study uses a qualitative method with a phenomenological

tradition (Kuswarno, 2009). The meaning of the objects observed in this study was brought by the research subjects, namely Asian students who are currently studying at Al Azhar University in Cairo who were affected by the Corona (Covid-19) pandemic to researchers. The informants in this study were determined by the snowball sampling technique (snowball). Snowball sampling technique is a sampling method where samples are obtained through a rolling process from one informant to another,

Snowball sampling is the selection of informants by rolling, which means from key informants and then directing them to the next informant who has similar experiences with key informants. Then it will continue continuously until the information obtained is said to be saturated. In this study, Rezkianti acted as the key informant, who then recommended other friends who also received the same treatment as him, in this case the unpleasant treatment of the Egyptians.

The data collection technique used is in-depth interviews. The interview according to Moleong is described as a conversation with a specific purpose (Moleong, 2018). The conversation will be carried out by two parties, namely the interviewer in this case the researcher who asks the question and the interviewee in this case the informant who provides answers to the question. In this study, later the researcher will ask a number of questions about the experiences felt by the informants, namely Asian students who are currently in Egypt in the midst of the corona pandemic by conducting interviews using cellphones.

In this study, the data analysis technique used was the Miles and Huberman interactive model data analysis. The procedure for analyzing qualitative data, according to Miles and Huberman, is described as follows:

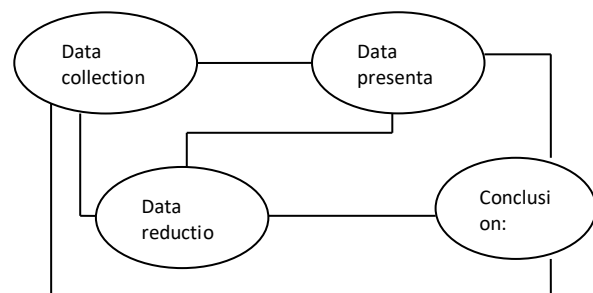


Figure 1. Data Analysis Process
Source : (Bungin, 2010)

As well as data validity techniques using triangulation. Triangulation technique is a technique of checking the validity of data that utilizes something other than the data for checking purposes or as a comparison against the data. The triangulation technique that researchers did was source triangulation (Kriyantono, 2014).

DISCUSSION

To answer the purpose of this study, which wanted to know the communication experience of Asian students studying in Egypt in the midst of the corona (covid-19) pandemic, the researchers used phenomenological theory and also described the concept of communication experience to reveal it, basically phenomenology comes from the word It is taken from the Greek word *phainomai* which means "to see". Phenomenon is a fact that is realized and entered into the human senses. The term phenomenology was only known before the 20th century. In its development, phenomenology is known as a philosophical school as well as a method of thinking, which examines human phenomena without questioning the causes of these phenomena, their objective reality, and their appearance. Phenomenology aims to study how phenomena are experienced in consciousness, thought and in action, such as how these phenomena are aesthetically valuable or acceptable. Phenomenology tries to find an understanding of how humans construct meaning and important concepts within the framework of intersubjectivity. Intersubjective because our understanding of the world is shaped by our relationships with other people. Although the meanings we create can be traced in our actions, works and activities, there are still other people's roles in it. Phenomenology tries to find an understanding of how humans construct meaning and important concepts within the framework of intersubjectivity. Intersubjective because our understanding of the world is shaped by our relationships with other people. Although the meanings we create can be traced in our actions, works and activities, there are still other people's roles in it. Phenomenology tries to find an understanding of how humans construct meaning and important concepts within the framework of intersubjectivity. Intersubjective because our understanding of the world is shaped by our relationships with other people. Although the meanings we create can be traced

in our actions, works and activities, there are still other people's roles in it (Kuswarno, 2009).

Next, talking about communication experiences, experience is something that is experienced. Through experience, individuals have knowledge. This is in accordance with the statement that: All objects of knowledge must conform to experience Knowledge underlies awareness that forms meaning. It is this awareness and meaning that encourages individuals to take certain actions or behaviors, with reference to behavior is an experience of consciousness that bestows meaning through spontaneous activity. Thus, it can be said that experience becomes the foundation for individuals in carrying out an action (Wirman, 2012).

Every event experienced will be an experience for the individual. The experience gained contains a certain information or message. This information will be processed into knowledge. Thus the various events experienced can increase individual knowledge. An event that contains elements of communication will be a separate communication experience for the individual, and the communication experience that is considered important will be the most memorable experience and have a special impact on the individual.

The experience that is used as the basis for individuals to take action is an experience that is attached to a phenomenon. This is confirmed by a statement which states that: people are retrieving a memory of a prior experience of phenomena, and strengthened by the statement: experience is connected to phenomena (Wirman, 2012).

The experience of the phenomenon referred to in this study is the experience of the communication phenomenon. Communication can be defined as a systemic process in which individuals interact with and through symbols to create and interpret meanings (Wirman, 2012). That is, communication refers to a systemic process among individuals who interact through certain symbols to generate and interpret meaning.

Through this reference, it can be explained that the communication experience referred to in this study is something experienced by individuals and is related to aspects of communication, including processes, symbols and meanings produced, as well as the impetus for action. Thus, the communication experience of Asian students, which is the focus of the results of

this study, can be described as a communication experience that also colors the self-representation of Asian students.

Furthermore, the experience will be categorized by the individual through the characteristics of the experience based on the meaning he gets. This refers to every intentional, experience in thematic....another aspect of intentional experience is its hyletic character...hyle are experiences that we undergo. In addition, Ihde (1977) also stated that: every experienced has its reference of direction toward what is experienced, every experienced phenomenon refers to or reflects a mode of experiencing to which it is present That is, experience refers to something that is experienced and the phenomena experienced will be classified into certain experiences. The statement illustrates that each experience has different characteristics.

The texture and structure of this experience describe what and how the experience is as well as distinguish a certain experience from other experiences. This refers to Keen's (1975) statement that: texture and structure are in continual relationship, in the process of explicating intentional experience and describes what and how of the experience (Wirman, 2012). Based on this explanation, in line with this research, communication experiences by Asian students studying in Egypt in the midst of the Corona pandemic will later be categorized into certain types of experiences, for example, pleasant communication experiences or unpleasant communication experiences.

In the perspective of classical phenomenology, there is an attempt to describe the types of experiences in the past. Husserl and Merleau-Ponty called it a pure description of lived experiences (Kuswarno, 2009). Heidegger called it hermeneutic, that is, interpreting types of experience by relating them to special aspects of the context that underlies them.

The character of a healthy relationship according to Rogers, namely: they possess positive attitudes of warmth and caring for the other (Wirman, 2012). This means that a pleasant (positive) communication experience can be reviewed, including through a relationship that shows a warm attitude, acceptance and concern for each other. while the communication experience is not pleasant (negative) means the opposite.

For Asian students studying in Egypt during the Corona pandemic, the acceptance or

rejection of society or the environment towards their status as students from Asia, will have an impact on communication between the two. Reports in the media about the initial cause of the Corona virus originating from Asia, coupled with the widespread news of the high death rate caused by the Corona virus can cause high sentimentality for Asian people who are in Egypt. This of course will cause conflict for students who come from countries in Asia with the people around them, resulting in poor interpersonal communication between the two. This will certainly provide an unpleasant communication experience.

In this study, researchers interviewed 8 informants. The following are informant data:

Table 1. Informant Data

No	Name	Origin	Level (Semester)
1	Ms. Najah	Indonesia	3
2	Ms. Rezkianti	Indonesia	3
3	Ms. Barrel	Indonesia	3
4	Ms. An	Indonesia	3
5	Ms. Fatimah	Indonesia	3
6	Mr. Ashraf	Malaysia	It's Over (LC)
7	Mr. Amir	Malaysia	4
8	Mr. Abdul	Singapore	4

Source: Research Results, 2021

In this study, researchers will discuss the unpleasant experiences experienced by Indonesian students who are currently studying in Egypt in the midst of this corona pandemic.

The first statement was delivered by Najah, when Najah and his friend who are also Indonesian students went to the market, the picture of the market was like "Ramayana" in Indonesia, after from the market he went to the terminal and took a bus after that he took public transportation, in the public transportation there was a mother and her two children Judging from the age range, Najah and his friends wanted to give money to the transportation driver, but because Najah and his friends were sitting at the back, he asked the mother for help to give the money to the driver, but instead of helping to give the money, the mother refused on the grounds that Najah and his friends were Asian and the cause of Corona.

Najah's statement is similar to the following interview excerpt:

"At that time, Najah was going to the market with friends. In Indonesia, the market is like the Ramayana. Now, from the Ramayana market, I want to go home,

go to the bus terminal first, then take public transportation. There are women in public transportation. with her two children, who if you see that their children are already quite big, then we are at the back, want to give money through mom to the driver, then mom doesn't want her to give us money because she's afraid of corona" (Based on the results of an interview with Najah on 24 March 2020).

Another experience was also felt by another Indonesian student named Rezkianti. At that time, Iki (his nickname) was traveling with three female junior high school students (school children in Egypt), then the schoolchildren insulted him as "Corona" while singing in front of him. The Indonesian student, annoyed with the actions of the three schoolchildren, the Indonesian student immediately pretended to sneeze in front of them, which caused the schoolchildren to scream uncontrollably, the people around who were there immediately looked cynically at him. the Indonesian student. The following is an excerpt from an interview with Rezkianti:

"When this incident happened, they were walking with 3 junior high school girls (Egyptian schoolchildren), then they made fun of this, they said "Corona..corona" (while singing) in front of this" because they were annoyed that they made fun of it, just do it pretending to sneeze in front of them, shouting at the person as loud as possible" (Based on the results of an interview with Rezkianti on March 24, 2020).

In addition there is also Laras who is an Indonesian student in the second semester at Al-Azhar, he told that at that time he was at the subway station about to go somewhere, when Laras was waiting for the train, the train station guard looked cynically and rudely at him. Laras and asked the question "you are from China, right?", then Laras also said that he was not from China but from Indonesia, seeing Laras stature who is an Asian, made him get unpleasant treatment from the Egyptians.

The above statement is reinforced by the following interview results:

"At that time it happened at the subway station, right, at that station Laras was asked by the gentlemen who guarded the

station, with a bitchy attitude, "Are you from China?" from Indonesia, but still, because Laras is an Asian, they think that Asians are spreading Corona" (Based on the results of an interview with Laras on March 25, 2020).

Besides that, other Indonesian students also had unpleasant experiences when they were in the market, when there was a gentleman who was a native of Egypt walking in front of a group of Indonesian students who were shopping there, the man immediately turned around to avoid the Indonesian students. This, another experience was also experienced when they wanted to buy eggs and oil, the Egyptian children who were natives there when they saw a group of Indonesian students immediately covered their noses while looking cynically at the Indonesian students who were shopping. As stated by AN in the following statement:

"There are also many near the market (referring to the unpleasant treatment), at that time they were shopping and the gentlemen who were walking in front of us (a group of Indonesian students) immediately turned all the way, to avoid us, continue shopping there , we are buying eggs and oil, there are Egyptian children standing near us and immediately covering their noses with their clothes" (Based on the results of an interview with AN on March 25, 2020).

At that time Fatimah was in a shopping center (Mahalawi) such as Hypermart in Indonesia. At that time there was a man who shouted "Corona" while covering his mouth to Fatimah. Here's an excerpt from the interview:

"At that time, Fatimah went to Mahalawi (a shopping center like Hypermart in Indonesia), and then Fatimah was shouted at "Corona" by an Egyptian man, while covering her nose she shouted at Fatimah" (Based on the results of an interview with Fatimah on March 25, 2020).

Apart from the experiences shared by students from Indonesia, students from Malaysia and Singapore also had similar experiences. As stated by Asyraf, a student from Malaysia. He said that because he had a facial

appearance that resembled an Asian, he was treated unpleasantly there, such as when he coughed a little, which was then viewed cynically by the local community. Even when he takes off his mask and people around see his face, he is said to be a "covid carrier". Here's an excerpt from the interview:

"I just coughed a little.. I already said covid, there was one more incident when I came home from Matam Subhi Kabir, there were children and their families asking for food. don't use. In the past, initially wearing a mask was perceived as a carrier of the corona virus, but now people are used to wearing masks" (Based on the results of an interview with Asyraf on 27 July 2021).

The next experience was delivered by Amir from Malaysia. He said that during the first year of the corona pandemic, he had an unpleasant experience with his friends who were buying food outside, the waiter at the restaurant didn't want to serve them and even ran away like he was scared to see them enter the restaurant while shouting "corona" to them. This is explained in the following interview excerpt:

"Oh yes, there is a story I want to share. Last year, my friends and I were walking in Abbas Al 'Aqad.. we had a chance to stop at the 'Burger King' shop. When we just entered the diner, the workers there kept running when they saw us enter and didn't want to take orders. I was a bit angry at that time and my friends and I went out. They (workers at 'Burger King') ran away saying "Corona".. this really happened to me and my friends at that time. There was also when I came out of the Emirate of my residence, there were children playing next to the nearby mosque. When I walk in front of them...they call me "corona" (Based on the results of an interview with Amir on 27 July 2021).

The last statement was delivered by Abdul from Singapore. Abdul said that during this pandemic, he had several unpleasant communication experiences, especially when dealing with Egyptian society. Like being shunned by the people around him even to the point of shouting "Corona". Here is the interview

statement:

"I've been shunned, people don't want to be in one place with us. While on the side of the road screaming "corona..corona" that's it, that's just some Egyptians" (Based on the results of an interview with Abdul on July 27, 2021).

The following is a chart of the unpleasant communication experiences experienced by Asian students in Egypt:

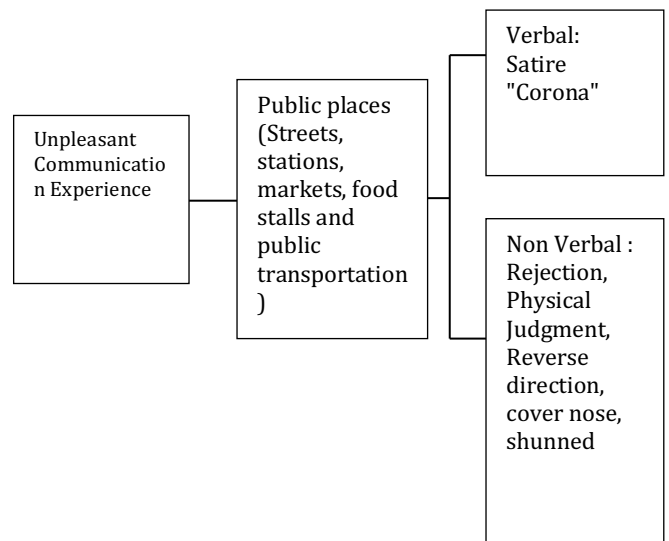


Figure 1. The Unpleasant Communication Experience of Asian Students in Egypt

Source: Research Results, 2021

CONCLUSION

During this Covid-19 Pandemic, of course, many Asian students have had experiences who are currently studying in Egypt. Regardless of whether the experience is pleasant or unpleasant. This study specifically discusses the unpleasant communication experiences experienced by Asian students in Egypt. Among the unpleasant communication experiences that occur in public places be it on roads, stations, markets, food stalls and public transportation. The forms of unpleasant communication experiences are in the form of verbal and non-verbal. In verbal form in the form of satire "corona" and in non-verbal form in the form of rejection, physical judgment, turning around when meeting Asian people, covering noses and feeling shunned by local residents.

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