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The Distribution of Mismatches in Government Policy Response against COVID-19 in Terms of Risk Communication and its Implications*

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Abstract

Purpose: This study aims to explore the effects of government's value intervention messages on the prevention and control of infectious disease in the risk communication process in terms of government policy response to COVID-19 from the mismatch message perspective, and draws the relevant implications. Due to the infection spread, some people point out that depression caused by COVID-19 is because of wrong signals of the government and infectious disease prevention and control authorities, namely value intervention messages. **Research design, data and methodology:** This study examined the epidemic situation through message details regarding the effects of government's mismatch messages on prevention and control of infectious disease and the resulting phenomena. **Results:** People's lives are under serious threat overall, so the declaration of the end of COVID-19 is almost impossible unlike MERS. Economic downturn due to forced prevention and control regulations of COVID-19, mistrust of social distancing, fatigue on mismatch messages, and moral hazard on the awareness of prevention and control of infectious disease are negative phenomena to risk communication on COVID-19. **Conclusions:** This study investigated the government authorities' policy sending wrong signals due to mismatching of the reality at this point in time for infectious disease prevention and control from the risk communication perspective.

Keywords: Risk Communication, Mismatch Message, Risk Management, New Confirmed COVID-19 Patients, Persons Released from Quarantine, Value Neutrality, Value Intervention

JEL Classification Code: D81, R11, Q56, Q58, I18

1. Introduction

People's fatigue is extreme due to the effects of COVID-19. Its effects are deepening to corona-black beyond corona-blue and corona-red (new words expressing depression and the level due to COVID-19). Corona-black is a new word indicating psychological effects of COVID-19 and refers to psychological state in which one feels depression, anxiety, anger, frustration and gloom. Due to vague policy of the

government authorities playing a key role in preventing and controlling epidemic spread, inconveniences of citizens have been added. For effective risk communication in response to COVID-19, the government authorities should send messages aiming at setting infectious disease prevention and control as the highest priority. The effect of messages by authority have a great effect on receivers, so the messages should be based on value-neutral and objective facts (Choi, 2020). If a mismatch occurs, the result causes a

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negative result of failure in infectious disease prevention and control. This study operationally defines “mismatch” as mismatching between useful and desirable situation and realistic situation in minimizing the spread of infection of COVID-19.

During the COVID-19 outbreak since 2019, there have been four phases of the pandemic in Korea. However, wrong messages have been continuously sent from the government and political sector making people’s awareness of prevention and control of infectious disease obscure. Some say that the four phases of COVID-19 pandemic are a man-made disaster, and they criticize that the government has wrapped the achievement of prevention and control of the pandemic as K-infectious prevention and control and has carried out self-praise, whereas the achievement has been fulfilled by owner-operators’ pain in livelihood and people’s voluntary participation.

The Korean President recently said the government will finish social distancing as strongly and strictly, but it has continued. As the message sent by the government is recognized as low in its realization possibility, the reliability and participation in the social distancing policy is gradually weakening.

A situation that government authorities or the relevant officials send messages by value judgement is shown in various places, while ignoring the real situation of COVID-19 infection spread. The First Deputy Manager of the Central Disaster and Safety Countermeasures Headquarters announced that they devised a reorganization plan for social distancing applied from July 1 through a regular briefing on June 20, despite 500 and over new confirmed COVID-19 patients on a daily average basis. He simultaneously proposed a new social distancing system reorganization plan based on self-control and responsibility by simplifying the current five-step social distancing into four-step social distancing. The government sent a message that they would release the prohibition of five and more people’s gathering and offer disaster subsidies for consumption promotion in relation to the ease of prevention and control of COVID-19 immediately before the 4th pandemic. A message from the government’s slack situation perception and under the resulting wrong judgment affected people’s awareness of prevention and control of the infectious disease and the

confirmed patients rapidly rose, centered in the Seoul Metropolitan Area, to over 1,000 people, while people’s wariness loosened. The government quickly turned to the promotion to fourth step of the infectious disease prevention and control regulations, putting the announcement of the reorganization plan to ease the COVID-19 prevention and control plan to shame. The 4th COVID-19 pandemic’s actualization could be incurred by the government itself. The mismatch messages of the government authorities disconnected from the real situation of COVID-19 did not play any role in controlling the infection spread. Rather regional, ideological or convictional separation was shown regarding the policy on the COVID-19 prevention and control.

This study found critical views from the messages of the government amid criticism that the government that should prevent the spread of infection uses prevention and control of COVID-19 for politics in each crisis in a situation that COVID-19 pandemic does not subside. If receivers wrongly accept messages by authority, risks of the risk management tend to be serious. This affects the awareness of COVID-19 prevention and control and has negative effects on the prevention of infection spread. Amid the number of confirmed patients soaring up to 2,000 each day in September 2021, inconveniences were caused to people alongside a criticism that government’s basic work loses the sense of reality due to the paralysis of the vaccine reservation site for the vaccination target people in their 50s. Not only mistrust of the prevention and control of epidemic policy, but also criticism of amateurism cannot be avoided. This study aims to examine the mismatch messages of the government authorities and the relevant officials as a cause of failure in the prevention and control of COVID-19 based on objective facts on the COVID-19 diffusion. Messages are an important factor in risk communication, and messages by authority have an almost equal effect to experience, so it greatly affects the awareness of infectious disease prevention and control. An analysis of coronavirus infection diffusion situation based on the government authorities’ messages to cope with COVID-19 has an important meaning to establish a desirable infectious disease management system.

Table 1: Number of Mean Daily Confirmed Patients for One Month with One Week Interval

Classification		4th week of May (5.23.~5.29.)	1st week of June (5.30.~6.5.)	2nd week of June (6.6.~6.12.)	3rd week of June (6.13.~6.19.)
No. of daily mean confirmed patients (people)	Domestically confirmed patients	562.3	578.4	524.3	444.4
	Confirmed patients from abroad	21.3	16.7	22.6	26.7
	Total	583.6	595.1	546.9	471.1

Source: Own

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. Risk Communication and Infectious Disease Management

Due to unpredictable uncertainties of social disasters such as natural disasters and infectious diseases, some point out that administrative response to serious disturbance like reservation of vaccines is also insufficient, while risk management becomes more difficult. Although it has been several years since the official communication system was launched, it is not properly working due to overall mismatch of the infectious disease prevention and control policy including accurate information offering beyond technical response, unilateral message transmission, and government authorities' loose awareness of risks. Rather, the messages of the infectious disease prevention and control authorities to control and manage risks and the relevant government figures cause a result of risk diffusion.

As for the infection dissemination situation in Korea, amid global COVID-19 pandemic situation, since the outbreak of the coronavirus in Wuhan, China in December 2019, the Blue House (Cheongwadae) and government are carrying out political prevention and control of COVID-19 according to medical school professors nationwide. The risk-related messages should be based on objective facts and value neutrality, but they are self-praise, vain hope, or messages of merciful heart, which has been proved from the 1st to 4th COVID-19 pandemic. If the messages were evaluated as proper messages suitable for situation from the early stage or diffusion process of COVID-19, the feeling of being slack towards the prevention and control of COVID-19 and mistrust towards government authorities would not be caused.

Risk communication contains not only offering risk information or knowledge, but also contains a meaning encompassing change of public's rational attitudes and behaviors with a value neutral attitude on situations. If risk including an infectious disease is amplified for a long time, economic recession prolongs, and people become exhausted and tired. Therefore, practice of risk communication has been required as an alternative effort to overcome limitations of public service on risk management in the existing risk administration field. The post of risk communication official was newly established in the Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency (KDCA) after the MERS incident. However, the practice of the risk communication of the official became shameful due to mismatch messages. The moral hazard on infectious disease prevention and control that started from the government is because the government does not properly understand the role of messages, the core of risk communication (Choi, Bae, & Kim, 2016).

2.2. Mismatch Messages and Value Intervention

In risk management, the government's messages are the core of risk communication, and has an important meaning in prevention of risk or risk diffusion. Consequently, messages related to risk should not work as a variable of other intentions as a value neutral and experience fact checking issue. When looking at the messages to respond to COVID-19, they were mainly the government authorities' mismatch messages, rather than objective messages based on scientific, value neutral facts. They greatly affected people's awareness of infectious disease prevention and control and caused moral hazard and sense of fatigue in the prevention and control of infectious disease.

In this study, the meaning of mismatch messages does not mean that mismatch messages are failure or wrongdoing. The result may be positive or negative due to mismatch of normative conditions and reality. Because this study is based on the effective risk communication aiming at prevention and control of COVID-19 as the foremost goal in the initial stage response to COVID-19, if mismatch occurs, government authorities' messages may become failure or cause a negative result. The concept of mismatch in existing studies is defined as mismatching between resources amount mobilized in achieving policy goal or expectation or priority, or inconsistency between policy's detailed factors or details, or the gap of pursuit between policy makers with different scale. The concept is useful in explaining gap between policy goal and actual achievement or explaining policy process change. Although there is limitation that the concept of mismatch is not precise, an inclusive and open concept is helpful, because diverse and comprehensive exploration is necessary (Choi, 2020). In this study, being dislocated from the desirable risk communication message requirements to respond to COVID-19 or deviating negatively from them is explained as a mismatch message.

Value intervention means a decision maker's value connection in a process to solve a problem. A value judgment is made about which is more important or less important in a process of selecting and deciding something, and value intervention is different from value judgment that is generally mentioned. Value intervention is based on a decision maker's interest and can be explained to find an alternative to problem solving. When it comes to COVID-19 messages, it can be the messages in which decision maker's value is intervened due to political judgment according to loss and profit. The COVID-19-related messages revealing the value intervention of the Blue House and government occurred several times up to the 4th COVID-19 pandemic.

The term value judgment, according to the explanation of Max Weber, means a practical judgment that a fact occurring in a field is realistically desirable or undesirable due to social, cultural, and ethical reasons or other reasons

(Weber, 1968). This is different from value intervention based on the interest of a decision maker or a researcher.

Value neutrality is based on objective fact. This refers to an attitude excluding judgment on subjective value, and refers to a state that is not involved in value judgment or value intervention asserting value or that does not put prejudice. Or value neutrality refers to a state that can more actively and fairly accept and maintain neutrality of various values. In *Technical Public Administration and Behavioral Public Administration* of W. Wilson and F. Taylor, value neutrality was emphasized, and they assert that value intervention should be excluded for objectivity to be maintained. Max Weber discerned *Gesinnungsethik* from *Verantwortungsethik*, based on which he asserted the value neutrality of scientific technology (Weber, 1968). Nowadays where we live in the risk society, the reflective ethics of responsibility in value neutrality is desperate.

2.3. Conceptual Framework of Analysis

The adequacy of messages of the government related to risk management can be a key factor to handle a situation. Government messages are formal. When a message contains factual relation, it becomes effective to gain citizen's sympathy. It is important to express details that individual subjects can sympathize with rather than usual report type announcement. For more serious risks, the government official messages account for more important part in risk management. Details on excuse or explanation on a situation come under fire, rather than help to ease or solve a risk. As mismatch messages of the government disconnected to situation like the response to COVID-10 are issued frequently, public credibility falls and people's moral hazard in the prevention and control of infectious disease can increase, and the mismatch messages work as a failure factor of infectious disease prevention and control.

The meaning of a message as a key factor of risk communication is a factor having a huge effect on the receiver's risk perception in risk management and control. Therefore, when issuing a message, objective and accurate details should be included based on fact. Namely, value-intervened messages used under any other reason regarding risk situation are not appropriate in risk management and control. The focus of this study lies in government authorities' messages working as a key factor of risk communication for efficient risk management.

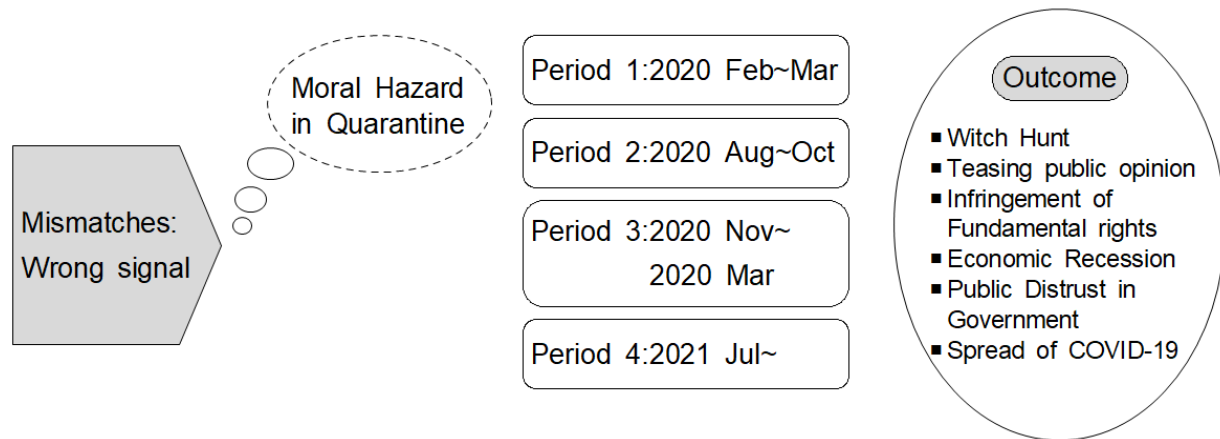
For adequacy of message details in risk communication, whether details are appropriate to situations, the government's formal or informal messages in risk communication should be examined. The government officials' individual messages need to be based on reality, and reliability should be secured objectively and value neutrally. The reason is that the messages are by authority or

public credibility and that they affect national awareness quite a lot as much as experience. The role of a message as a key factor of risk communication is value neutrality on situations, as well as accurate and enough information and knowledge offering beyond simple situation report, and it helps the public efficiently cope with the relevant risk (Choi & Kim, 2017).

The details of a concrete message, namely a message related to hazard was defined mainly focusing on risk communication (Breakwell, 2000). The government authorities' messages as a communication strategy on a risk with huge uncertainties, namely on a novel infectious disease is a very important tool in managing the risk efficiently.

In this study, the value-intervened mismatch messages related to the government authorities' response to COVID-19 have been mainly examined. Based on press releases, online articles, and other related data/materials, this study examined whether the government authorities' messages were appropriate to actual infectious disease prevention and control during the 1st to 4th COVID-19 pandemic. By dividing the pandemic as the first to fourth period, the messages mentioned before each pandemic were found. The messages of the Blue House and government related to COVID-19 are the messages based on authority and they can hugely affect people's awareness of the prevention and control of infectious disease; therefore they need to be examined for efficient risk management as a key factor of risk communication. In the COVID-19 spread, people's moral hazard on the infectious prevention and control is regarded to start from the mismatch messages from the Blue House and government. The government authorities' messages should be objective and value neutral based on accurate perception of situations for risk management and also facts. However, the government authorities' messages have increased people's moral hazard with wrong signals until the 4th COVID-19 pandemic. Inappropriate remark of "murderer" targeting some specific group caused only social conflicts due to a negative phenomenon such as witch hunting. Those messages were failure causing infection dissemination and mistrust towards the government.

This study set the analysis period from January 20, 2020 when the first confirmed patient occurred until July 31, 2021. Based on the 1st to 4th COVID-19 pandemic when infection explosively spread, the period was divided into the first period to the fourth period (Figure 1). Major government authorities' messages and phenomena mentioned around each period were examined. As for the analysis data, the number of new confirmed patients and the number of persons released from quarantine were looked into by which whether infectious prevention and control authorities' press releases and the messages of the government and government officials were appropriate could be inferred.



Source: Own

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of Analysis

3. Analysis: Government's Mismatch Messages

3.1. Period Classification and Progress of Events

The period division was based on the time when the number of confirmed patients soared from the 1st to the 4th COVID-19 pandemic. The first, second, third, and fourth period was classified from February to March 2020, from August to October 2020, from November 2020 to March 2021, and from July 2021 to July, respectively.

The summary of the messages of the COVID-19 prevention and control authorities, President Moon, and government officials that were reported in the press/media from the 1st to the 4th COVID-19 pandemic was examined. Through this, the messages were mismatch not accurately perceiving the relevant situations. The risk-related messages of the Blue House or government authorities were by authority and greatly affect people's awareness of infectious disease prevention and control. The government authorities should communicate through value neutral, accurate, and quick messages based on the risks and objective facts as a main player of risk communication. Furthermore, people's sympathy should be formed. The government authorities' messages making conflict between the blocks in response to COVID-19 also appeared. The deeds of doctors and nurses who made efforts to solve the COVID-19 spread in Daegu were mentioned as the sacrifices and services of only nurses; thus anger was incurred from doctors. At the backdrop of the government authorities' remark is the doctors' objection against the government's health service policy. The government authorities' inappropriate messages cause only ill effects on the response to COVID-19. The risk-related messages should not be used as a variable due to some other

reasons. As seen in Figure 2, the mismatch messages of the pandemic prevention and control authorities and government officials that did not properly recognize situations in which risk did not finish could be confirmed. Figure 2 reconstituted the government officials' mismatch messages based on the pandemic situation. In relation to publicly credible press articles' ripple effects, the reported government authorities' messages greatly affect people's awareness of infectious disease prevention and control.

The government authorities made people's cautions against COVID-19 be slack with inappropriate mismatch messages emphasizing only administrative achievements unlike production of real situation of COVID-19. The government authorities professed herd immunity is possible by November with vaccination of all Korean people without solving the unclear situation in securing vaccines. Through consolidated infectious disease regulations breaching personal freedom and basic rights including social distancing and the prohibition of private meetings, the sacrifice of small business owners was forced, and situations in which people's fatigue on government's mismatch messages frequently occurred. The trend in the number of weekly average new confirmed patients and the number of persons released from quarantine (Figure 3) was examined, through which the government's mismatch messages by pandemic period (Figure 2) could be estimated. In Figure 3, the golden cross weeks that could be seen as an opportunity to manage and control the inspection spread could be confirmed. There is a regret that the golden cross weeks should be used as an opportunity for desirable situation.

Inappropriate Signals (messages) mentioned before the COVID-19 Pandemic			
1st	2nd	3rd	4rd
Feb. 13, 2020 President Moon "COVID-19 will end before long."	Aug. 11, 2020 President Moon "The most successful prevention and control model without lockdowns"	Nov. 25, 2020 New confirmed patients surpassed 500. 3rd pandemic is full-fledged	Jun. 18, 2021 Gwon, Jun-Wook, CDSCH Div. 2 Director "Vaccination size: 20th ranked in the world"
Feb. 18, 2020 1st pandemic started among Daegu Shincheonji believers	Aug. 14, 2020 New confirmed patients surpassed 100, 2nd pandemic started	Nov. 30, 2020 President Moon "Received praise in COVID-19 prevention and control and economy in the world"	Jun.20, 2021 Announced the ease and reorganization plan for new social distancing
	Oct. 20, 2020 Prime Minister Chung Sye-Kyun "K-prevention and control of COVID-19 raises national status."	Dec. 12, 2020 new confirmed patients surpassed 1,000	Jun. 22, 2021 President Moon "Major developed countries highly evaluated Korean prevention and control of COVID-19"
			July 7, 2021 1,212 new confirmed Patients occurred, 4th pandemic in full swing

Source: Own

Figure 2: Government Messages around the 1st to 4th COVID-19 Pandemic

The five-phase allocation system was implemented due to serious mask disturbance in March 2020, after COVID-19 broke out for the first time. In May 2021, a setback in LDS syringe supply occurred in major large cities including Seoul, Busan, and Daegu. In June and July 2021, serious vaccine reservation disturbance occurred due to the lack of vaccine supply and vaccine reservation system paralysis. The helplessness of K-prevention and control of infectious disease that covered previous errors was wrapped with government’s mismatch messages. The moral hazard on the prevention and control of infectious disease in each period of pandemic was triggered by the government, and the messages of the President and government officials by value intervention instigated the moral hazard further. The government actually abandoned the infection spread throughout the pandemic. After the President’s message “COVID-19 will come to an end,” the 1st pandemic occurred, centered on Daegu Shincheonji believers in several days. The 2nd COVID-19 pandemic followed after a message “We have become the most successful COVID-19 prevention and control model country without lockdowns.” In the initial stage, the more confirmed COVID-19 patients from abroad could be confirmed from the trend in the number of confirmed patients according to KDCA’s press release; therefore, the government made a remark, which was far from the error of not preventing inflow from abroad. The mismatch messages without identifying situations cannot but be viewed as intervention of political logic. The President’s mismatch messages ignoring “The end of the tunnel of COVID-19 is seen”, and

“Vaccine supply is smooth” can be the messages in which value intervened far from objective facts. They are risk communication behavior giving burden to infectious disease prevention and control.

The world is not relaxing on the uncertainties of COVID-19, and the government mentioned a policy to ease prevention and control of COVID-19 making people’s awareness loose. Quite a number of expert’s view that rash messages helped moral hazard in people’s awareness of quarantine and brought the 4th COVID-19 pandemic. Failure occurred in predicting situations and making desirable situations. Criticism that government responsibility is huge by issuing mismatch messages and that government’s so called 3T (test, tracking, treatment and quarantine) asserting like an achievement was based on people’s inconveniences and sacrifices continued.

A criticism that the government which failed in recent vaccine supply attributes the responsibility of failure in preventing and controlling COVID-19 to those in their 20s and 30s and that a rash ease of the prevention and control of COVID-19 caused the 4th pandemic forcing small business owners’ sacrifice appeared. This is analyzed that the messages easing the COVID-19 prevention and control policy are regarded as a cause of failure and corresponding to mismatch.

The recent 4th pandemic occurred after the full-swing vaccination started, which is different from the past three times of pandemic. The government continuously released messages related to ease of prevention and control of infectious disease through no mask wearing, new social

distancing reorganization if one gets only first vaccination. The 4th pandemic proves that the policy related to COVID-19 is not the messages based on objective facts. The moral hazard on infectious disease prevention and control started from the government’s mismatch messages. Value intervention by political logic lacking objective facts was connected to government’s misjudgment, and brought failure of COVID-19 prevention and control.

Figure 3 shows the trend in the number of new confirmed COVID-19 patients and the number of people released from quarantine from the 1st to the 4th COVID-19 pandemic. It was examined on the basis of various COVID-19 records from Jan. 20, 2020 to Feb. 22, 2021 by the former and current medical school professors of the Health and Medical Commission. From January 20, 2020 when the first confirmed patient had occurred, the trend (Figure 3) of them was reinvestigated by expanding the period to July 31, 2021 based on the press releases of KDCA. According to the investigation result, it was confirmed that there were three times of golden cross weeks during the pandemic period. Although relaxation was shown through the first golden cross week until the 4th COVID-19 pandemic, the level could not return to the level before the 1st COVID-19 pandemic. After the second and third golden cross weeks, some relaxation was shown for a while, and then they were connected to a negative phenomenon of the 4th COVID-19 pandemic of explosive increase of the confirmed patients. The first, second, and third golden cross weeks were from Mar. 16 to March 22, 2020, from Sep. 7 to Sep. 13, 2020 and

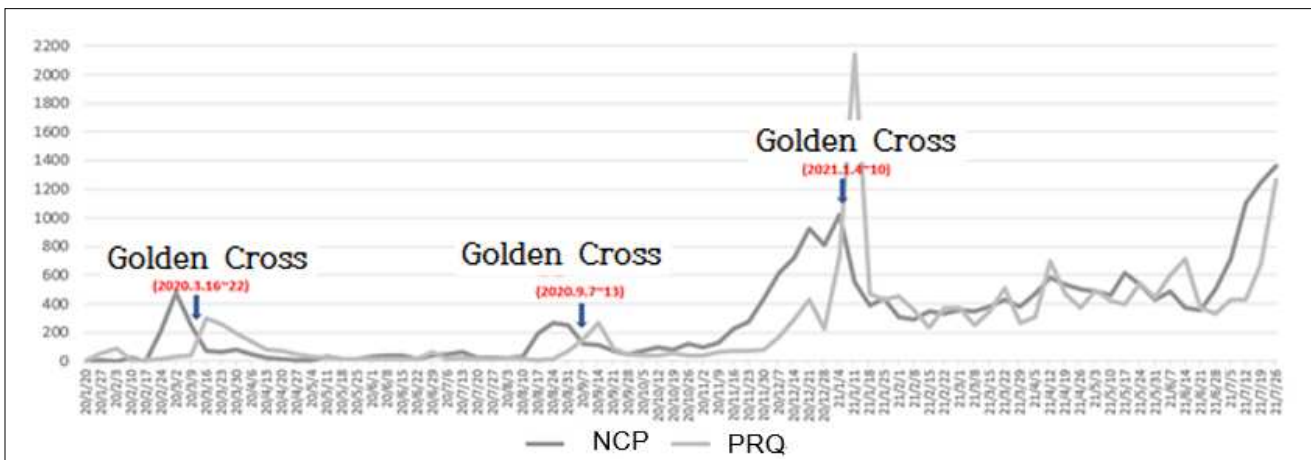
from Jan. 4, 2021 to Jan. 10, 2021, each (Lee, 2021).

The mismatch messages of the government played a part for the explosive increase of confirmed patients reaching 2,000 each day as of July 2021. While the new confirmed patients rapidly rose to 1,212 on July 7, 2021, the 4th COVID-19 pandemic broke out through the addition of confirmed patients of new delta variants. Amid higher risk level and difficult vaccination issue, the government authorities’ mismatch messages have been embarrassing, but the responsibility of failure to the prevention and control of COVID-19 was responded by the image of integrity by disclosing the use details of business operating expenses of the Commissioner of KDCA to the press. As anxiety increases due to heavy increase of the confirmed COVID-19 patients, opinions on how to accept the government authorities’ mismatch messages are revealed in two conflicting ways: moving stories and anger between the blocks. Table 2 shows the 4th COVID-19 pandemic in which daily confirmed patients rapidly increase. The inappropriate messages different from situations affect complacency of moral hazard on infectious disease prevention and control and various negative phenomena are revealed. While only uncertainties on the declaration of the end of COVID-19 grow, the messages with public credibility have a huge meaning for huge risk management. As for messages in risk communication with big uncertainties such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the messages excluding value intervention based on scientific and objective facts are important, while having insight on risk situations.

Table 2: Number of New Daily Confirmed Patients after the 4th COVID-19 Pandemic (July 6~ July 20)

Date	7/6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
No. of conformed patients	746	1,212	1,275	1,316	1,378	1,324	1,100	1,150	1,615	1,600	1,536	1,452	1,454	1,252	1,278

Source: Own

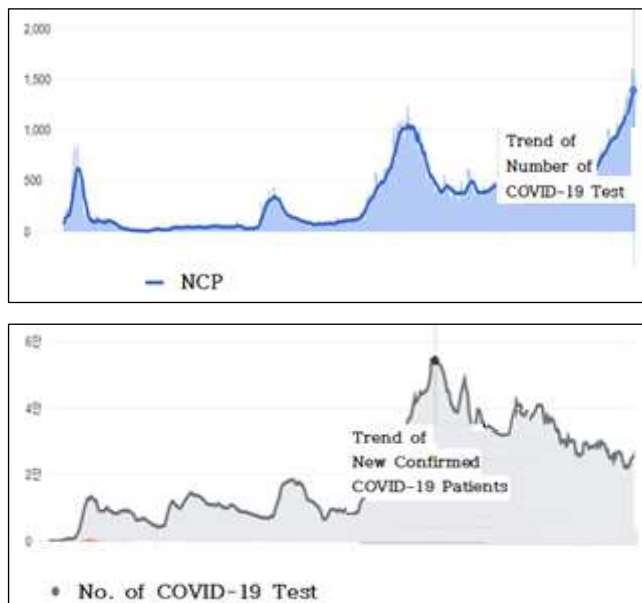


Source: Own

Figure 3: Trend in the Number of Average Weekly New Confirmed Patients (NCP) and Number of Persons Released from Quarantine (PRQ)

When looking at the confirmed patients in Figure 4 in comparison with the number of new confirmed patients and the number of COVID-19 tested people, the number of the confirmed patients is related to the number of the tested people. The trends of the two graphs show almost similar aspects. When considering this, when COVID-19 tests are conducted less, the number of the confirmed patients decreases. When the tests are carried out more, the number of the confirmed patients increases. However, many people do not know the fact until recently. How the number of deaths and fatality rate, especially the excessive number of deaths since the breakout of COVID-19 can be explained is unknown. Regarding the government authorities' COVID-19 prevention and control situation report messages, there is a negative view that all people are excessively controlled and trained, while focusing on the number of confirmed patients, infection path, and risks. Especially there is a counterargument that the government authorities' messages to strictly cope with any violation of the COVID-19 prevention and control guidelines have excessively forced the breach of personal freedom and basic rights.

COVID-19 pandemic is currently ongoing. It is unknown if the virus will be overcome by enduring it by people. The government authorities should lead people's behaviors with proper messages regarding risk situations based on scientific and objective facts to keep people's health and lives by throwing away behaviors carried out with mismatch messages. The messages need to be required for rational people's behaviors to overcome the situations.



Source: Own

Figure 4: Trend in New Confirmed COVID-19 Patients and Number of Daily Tested People

3.2. Government's Value Intervention Mismatch Messages

The formal declaration of the end of COVID-19 is regarded as impossible unlike MERS in light of global pandemic situation. In Korea, the 4th COVID-19 has recently started. In the initial stage, people trusted the government by listening to the government authorities' messages. However, people's response to COVID-19 is gradually insensitive alongside frustration, gloom, and anxiety, while watching the government authorities' selective execution related to COVID-19 prevention and control administration, as well as people are tired of selective social distancing along with recent daily new confirmed patients' explosive increase.

It has been known that management and control of the confirmed COVID-19 patients has not been properly carried out through the three times of golden cross weeks with the 4th COVID-19 pandemic. The messages derived from value intervention by government authorities' slack perception and political interest as wrong signals increased people's moral hazard. The government authorities' perception on COVID-19 is distant from the reality and situation perception of people can be known through the government authorities' mismatch messages. Starting with the pandemic by which infected people greatly increase, let's take a look at the government's mismatch messages in each period by dividing the pandemic into 1st to 4th period. In the 1st period, President Moon's message, "COVID-19 prevention and control has entered stable stage and it will end before long. However, the 1st COVID-19 pandemic through regional infection diffusion started, centered on Daegu Shincheonji believers. As a negative phenomenon, witch hunting was revealed with excessive criticism on a specific group by various media, rather than focusing on the COVID-19 prevention and control. In the 2nd period, President Moon said on August 11, 2020 "Korea became the most successful model country in COVID-19 prevention and control without regional and national border lockouts". There were visible effects in countries that executed overall lockouts. China that enforced overall lockouts of Wuhan and also Taiwan conducted overall prohibition of entry from abroad. However, after several days of Korean government's self-praise message, the 2nd pandemic was brought due to explosive increase of infected people. In the 3rd period, there was a message from President Moon "We are receiving praise in the world in terms of COVID-19 prevention and control and economy. This message casts a wrong situation perception that the prevention and control of infectious disease is performed well, while daily confirmed patients exceeded 500 and headed toward 1,000. The 3rd pandemic was prevalent and the economic downturn and mistrust towards the government occurred. In the 4th period,

President Moon said on June 22, 2021 “Major developed countries highly rated Korean COVID-19 prevention and control and we will strive to end the 4th level of social distancing as short and strict”. However recent daily confirmed patients were about 2,000, and so the 4th pandemic is in place. When looking at the government top leader’s messages, the perception of the relevant officials receiving the President’s direction and executing COVID-

19 prevention and control administration can be regarded as no need to say about it.

The risk communication should be useful in minimizing infection diffusion and should be a key factor for desirable situation, but the government authorities’ messages were inappropriate to respond to COVID-19. Table 2 shows the summary of how the messages are distant from the reality.

Table 3: Government’s Mismatch Messages and Outcomes

Category	Message Details (Wrong Signals)	Outcomes
1st Pandemic: Feb.~Mar. 2020	On Feb. 13, 2020, President Moon, “COVID-19 will end before long.”	Regional infection diffusion centered on Daegu Shincheonji believers ➤ Witch hunting, 1st pandemic
First golden cross week: Mar. 16~Mar. 22, 2020		
2nd Pandemic: Aug.~Oct. 2020	Aug. 11, President Moon, “Korea became the most successful model country of COVID-19 prevention and control without lockouts”. Oct. 20, Prime Minister Chung Sye-Kyun, “K-COVID-19 prevention and control is raising national status.”	On Aug. 14, new confirmed patients surpassed 100 ➤ Media brainwashing, breach of personal freedom and basic rights, 2nd pandemic
Second golden cross week: Sep. 7~Sep. 13, 2020		
3rd Pandemic: Nov.~Mar. 2020	Nov. 30, President Moon, “We receive praise in COVID-19 prevention and control and economy in the world.” Dec. 9, President Moon, “The end of the tunnel of COVID-19 is seen with vaccine and medicine.”	On Nov. 25, new confirmed patients surpassed 500. On Dec. 12, new confirmed patients surpassed 1,000. ➤ Economic downturn, mistrust towards government, full-fledged 3rd pandemic
Third golden cross week: Jan. 4~Jan. 10, 2021		
4th Pandemic: Jul. 2021 ~	Jun. 18, 2021, Gwon Jun-Wook, CDSCH Div. 2 Director, “Vaccination size: 20th ranked in the world” Jun. 20, Announced a reorganization plan to ease new social distancing. Jun. 22, President Moon, “Major developed countries highly rated Korean COVID-19 prevention and control.” Jul. 12, President Moon, “We will do our best to end the 4th step of social distancing as short and strict.”	On Jul. 7, new confirmed patients were 1,212. Daily average was 1300 ➤ 4th pandemic in full swing

Source: Own

4. Conclusion

4.1. Summary & Concluding Remarks

It has been over one year since the COVID-19 outbreak in our society. Recent heavy increase of confirmed COVID-19 patients in the 4th COVID-19 pandemic cast frustration and gloom in everyday life. People, however, gradually become insensitive to COVID-19. As time went on, wariness became loose, and mistrust and fatigue deepened due to government authorities’ messages distant from the reality of COVID-19. In the initial stage, people listened to the COVID-19 prevention and control authorities’ messages;

however, hostility against government announcements is gradually becoming bigger due to new confirmed patients over 2,000 each day, people’s economic failure arising from forced COVID-19 prevention and control regulations including selective distancing, vaccine-related supply issue, and side effects of vaccination. The K-COVID-19 prevention and control which the government self-praised was revealed to be illusion.

In this study, the government authorities’ mismatch messages related to COVID-19 prevention and control were examined. The mismatch messages of the government authorities or officials worked as a factor bring failure in the prevention and control of the infectious disease. Although

there were more infected people coming from abroad in the initial stage, they said “Korea became the most successful model country without lockdowns.” This was a mismatch message that ignored experts’ opinion that an essential principle in the initial stage prevention of infectious disease is to block people coming from abroad. Due to value intervention stemming from political interest, clear scientific principles were ignored through the expert cooperative to them. Consequently, all people have suffered over a year (Lee, 2021). In short, the government authorities have been consistent with mismatch messages distant from the reality during the COVID-19 pandemic, and they effectively failed in management and control of risk diffusion, which is a goal of risk communication.

As a result of analyzing government authorities’ response to COVID-19 based on the messages, the government’s mismatch messages, as shown in Table 2, have ignored the realistic situations, and negatively affected to increase criticism and moral hazard. In the response to COVID-19 of the government authorities, social distancing as breach of personal freedom and basic rights has been carried out selectively in various sectors under the name of COVID-19 prevention and control, has excessively forced people’s patience, namely has overly forced. Safety Shinmungo has changed to a corona-black society where people mutually accuse using IT technology beyond original purpose as a super-surveillance society. Due to all this, criticism towards the government is getting bigger. Although COVID-19 prevention and control regulations are essentially needed, when they are selectively forced, they tend to lose trust and work as side effects in managing the infectious disease.

If infectious disease control is performed according to political interest, only the phrase “groundless K-prevention and control of infectious disease” is left. If political logic works, instead of scientific and realistic approach on situations, value intervention is made and the relevant messages are degraded as those according to political interest, and a mismatch phenomenon occurs. Therefore, Korean prevention and control of COVID-19 is nothing but wrapping of the serious disturbance of masks in the initial stage of COVID-19 and the present situations with mismatch messages.

4.2. Policy Implications

COVID-19 is still ongoing, and it is unknown when the infected people’s rapid increase will stop globally. Nonetheless, the behaviors of the government consistently issuing mismatch messages in response to coronavirus are criticized. As a result of examining the press releases and online articles of KDCA, first it was understood that government authorities’ mismatch messages on the

infectious disease affected people’s moral hazard on the awareness of prevention and control of COVID-19. Second, government’s mismatch messages caused a witch hunting towards specific groups under the name of infectious diseases prevention and control, and it was understood that political logic was involved. Third, the mismatch messages have made people perceive the response to the COVID-19 pandemic through excessive terror or insensitiveness in some sense. The mismatch messages increased the moral hazard by loosening wariness with wrong signals to people, fostered mistrust towards the government with messages different from situations, and were connected to overall failure of COVID-19 prevention and control.

Political value intervention not only corresponds to messages, but also social distancing guidelines are selectively operated, so there is a need to recommend people to abide by the infectious disease prevention and control guidelines with personal distancing under the autonomous judgment. As coronavirus prolongs, the shift of relevant administration is urgent in consideration of the failed economy and side effects due to online education, and other social conflicts. People’s damage type and size may differ depending on how the government authorities respond. If effective response is made to an infectious disease, personal and national economic damages can be reduced, as well as health damages. Access should have been enhanced so that anybody wishing to get tested of COVID-19 can be tested. Especially government officials’ messages like a murderer such as criticizing confirmed patients or a witch hunting against collective infection may cause only social conflicts, which needs to carefully examine themselves.

As the novel virus has high uncertainties, the response to it should be based on scientific principles and facts rather than political logic. Regarding the response to COVID-19, the administration by government authorities’ mismatch messages is remarkably visible. In risk communication, messages should secure adequacy and reliability. Messages by authority affect the national awareness; therefore they need to contain the details recommending to comply with the infectious disease prevention and control guidelines in a direction to respect personal free intention and induce rational people’s behaviors. If another novel infectious disease occurs, the government authorities’ mismatch messages offering wrong signals as shown in the response to COVID-19 are expected not to be repeated.

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