

The Impact of Populist Leadership on Social Cohesion in Indonesia's Digital Age: A Netnographic Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Keywords:
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netnography.

This study aims to understand the use of digital media in populist leadership and its impact on social cohesion in the digital era. It addresses a research gap regarding populist leadership interactions, specifically how digital communication strategies can either encourage or hinder public participation in democracy. Two main research questions are posed: (1) How do populist leadership communication strategies utilize digital platforms to build power? (2) What is the impact of social cohesion fragmentation in Indonesian society due to digital communication? This study employs a netnographic method with a qualitative approach, analyzing comments on six YouTube channels—three supporting Jokowi (Total Politik, Cokro TV, Zulfan Lindan Unpacking) and three opposing him (Refly Harun Channel, RG Official, Akbar Faisal Uncensor). Findings reveal that President Joko Widodo's populist communication strategy is evident in language style (persuasive, interactive, informative-educational, provocative), narratives (expository, artistic, suggestive), symbols (social media interaction, personalized messaging), and media channels (labeling content as fake news, delegitimization, and constructive messaging). Its impact on social cohesion includes polarization, conflict, and pseudo-solidarity. Therefore, populist leadership must be managed effectively to bridge differences, reduce conflicts, and strengthen unity in diversity.

BACKGROUND

In the contemporary digital epoch, there has been a marked proliferation of populist leadership in Indonesia. This occurrence manifests not only within local communities but also at the level of national governance (Mietzner, 2015). Populist leadership is frequently delineated by a more intimate engagement with the populace, wherein leaders endeavor to comprehend and directly address the needs and aspirations of their constituents. This leadership paradigm cultivates a more robust rapport between leaders and citizens, thereby facilitating active public involvement in the decision-making process and augmenting transparency within governance (Lühr et al., 2023). Furthermore, this circumstance propels innovation in communication modalities between leaders and the public, wherein digital technology emerges as an indispensable instrument for the dissemination of information and the fostering of constructive discourse.

In this regard, the function of digital media in shaping the narratives of populist leadership is of paramount importance—not merely at the community level but also at the national echelon. Social media and online platforms empower leaders to engage a broader audience, expedite the dissemination of information, and establish venues for direct public engagement with proposed policies. Consequently, leaders can exhibit heightened responsiveness to the needs and aspirations of society, thereby nurturing an environment conducive to enhanced collaboration and participation in governance.

Conversely, when populist leaders exploit the capabilities of digital media inappropriately, there exists a significant risk of proliferating misleading information and exacerbating societal polarization. Such dynamics can impede healthy discourse and engender tensions among disparate groups within society. Should this reality remain inadequately managed, it may precipitate profound social fragmentation, obstructing endeavors to cultivate consensus and reinforce social cohesion. In this framework, it is imperative for both leaders and society to collaboratively establish norms that endorse constructive communication and uphold the integrity of information disseminated through digital platforms.

Therefore, the collaboration among governmental entities, civil society organizations, and the private sector is crucial for formulating effective strategies to confront these challenges, while simultaneously ensuring that technology serves as an instrument to enhance democratic processes and collective welfare (Brodetskaya, 2016). Current literature on populist leadership has predominantly concentrated on the individual traits of leaders (De Luca & Ciaglia, 2017), patterns of leadership management (Sandri et al., 2019), relationships between leaders and citizens (Sandri et al., 2019), and the ramifications of implemented policies (Dumps, 2023). Nonetheless, it is equally imperative to investigate how digital democracy either fortifies or undermines social

cohesion in the context of populist leadership. Such an examination could yield profound insights into the interplay among technology, leadership, and public engagement, as well as elucidate how these components interact within the framework of modern democracy.

In light of this phenomenon and prior research outcomes, the forefront of this study is dedicated to scrutinizing the relationship between digital technology and populist leadership, with the objective of understanding how digital platforms affect the ways in which leaders engage with the public and influence public sentiment. The research gap is identified in the exploration of specific facets of the interplay between populist leadership and digital communication strategies that remain under-researched, especially regarding how these strategies either promote or obstruct active public engagement in the democratic process.

This research endeavours to address two pivotal inquiries: In what manner do populist leaders leverage digital platforms to reinforce their power? Additionally, what consequences does the fragmentation of social cohesion have for Indonesian society in this digital age? The aim of this investigation is to achieve a holistic comprehension of the role of digital media platforms in populist leadership and to evaluate the effects of public participation on social cohesion in the contemporary digital environment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Populist Leadership

The phenomenon of populist leadership fundamentally accentuates characteristics that are oriented towards mass engagement, wherein leaders frequently utilize emotive and symbolic rhetoric to capture public attention and establish connections with the populace (McDonnell, 2016; Sorensen, 2018). This leadership style often capitalizes on digital platforms to disseminate their communications, which possesses the potential to either fortify or impair social cohesion amongst various societal factions (Blassnig et al., 2019; Bobba, 2019). Concurrently, the utilization of social media as a predominant medium of communication allows populist leaders to engage directly with their constituents; however, it also runs the risk of exacerbating polarization and intensifying discord among groups with divergent perspectives (Mazzoleni & Bracciale, 2018). In this framework, it is imperative to scrutinize how these dynamics influence social cohesion and facilitate the emergence of constructive discourse among diverse societal groups.

The attributes of populist leadership predominantly concentrate on the needs and ambitions of the populace, frequently neglecting the intricacies inherent in broader sociopolitical challenges (Nai & Martinez i Coma, 2019). Nonetheless, should these complexities remain inadequately addressed, they are profoundly prone to instigating protracted conflicts, wherein widespread

dissatisfaction can initiate a sequence of events that disrupts societal stability and cohesiveness (Hrubic & Uhde, 2019). It is vital for leaders to acknowledge their obligation in cultivating an inclusive narrative, wherein all perspectives are acknowledged and esteemed, to mitigate the risk of further polarization.

Digital Democracy

The evolution of democracy in the digital epoch fundamentally highlights the significance of equitable and transparent access to information, as well as the necessity for active public engagement in decision-making processes through digital mediums (Schwanholz & Graham, 2018; Danylenko, 2021). The conceptual framework of digital transformation encompasses multiple dimensions, including enhanced public involvement, the employment of technology to promote governmental transparency, and the creation of instruments that empower citizens to articulately convey their aspirations and grievances (Mendybayev & Burbayeva, 2021). Consequently, the application of technology must be executed judiciously to guarantee that all societal segments can partake in democratic discourse and reap the beneficial outcomes of transformation (Gadzhiev, 2022). The contrary scenario must be meticulously avoided—whereby digital transformation serves to benefit a diminutive elite while the broader populace suffers as a consequence (Cherep et al., 2022).

In this context, social media assumes a pivotal role in bolstering populist narratives. Social media can function as an efficacious conduit for communication between government entities and the public, engendering a forum for constructive and inclusive dialogue (Kamatula, 2017; Hendrix, 2019). By leveraging these platforms, citizens are afforded greater accessibility to information and the opportunity to provide immediate feedback, which, in turn, cultivates governmental accountability in decision-making processes. Furthermore, social media empowers individuals to articulate their aspirations and concerns, thereby fostering a collective consciousness that can substantially influence public policy on a broader scale (Neverov & Budko, 2017).

Even though Indonesia has entered the era of digital democracy, public accountability remains a priority (Shahib & Rato Risky, 2017; Priowidodo et al., n.d.). Therefore, it is important for all stakeholders to collaborate in creating a transparent and responsive digital ecosystem, ensuring that every citizen's voice is heard and valued. Digital democracy opens up space for dialogue and the exchange of ideas, strengthening citizen participation in decision-making processes (Süße, 2019; Mahajan, 2023). Active public engagement is expected to result in public policies that better reflect the needs and aspirations of the people while also fostering trust between the government and its citizens. This involvement not only enhances policy legitimacy but also cultivates a sense of ownership among citizens toward the ongoing democratic process.

Social Cohesion and Fragmentation

The concept of social cohesion fundamentally refers to the strength of relationships between individuals within a community, which can enhance solidarity and cooperation among them (Hulse & Stone, 2007). Social cohesion plays a crucial role in creating a conducive environment for social and economic development, where individuals feel connected and support each other in achieving common goals (Dragolov et al., 2016; Mishra, 2022).

Robust social cohesion serves as a significant mechanism for mitigating conflicts and tensions within societal frameworks, thereby facilitating the stability imperative for sustainable growth and advancement (Sari et al., 2014). Conversely, if inadequately managed, social cohesion may become susceptible to inciting fragmentation, which can result in social exclusion and divisions among community members (Kiguwa & Langa, 2015). Empirical evidence indicates that numerous nations have encountered social fragmentation when leadership fails to effectively reconcile the interests of diverse groups, culminating in societal dissatisfaction and escalating tensions.

A plethora of scholarly investigations regarding the ramifications of populist leadership on fragmented societies underscores the propensity of populist rhetoric and policies to intensify social divisions (Barbieri, 2018), thereby delineating more pronounced boundaries among societal groups (Bartha et al., 2020). Consequently, it is imperative for leadership to embrace an inclusive and dialogical methodology in decision-making processes, with the objective of cultivating consensus and fostering harmony among varied societal factions (Asenbaum, 2020). Leadership methodologies that emphasize collaboration and active engagement from all stakeholders are vital in averting conflict escalation and nurturing a more stable and cohesive social milieu.

The crux of this approach resides in the establishment of trust between leaders and the broader society, ensuring that each individual perceives their value and possesses a voice in the decision-making continuum (Havrysh & Zоргach, 2022). By fostering environments conducive to open dialogue and transparency, leaders can stimulate wider participation and guarantee that a multitude of perspectives are acknowledged and integrated into policy formulation.

Netnography Perspective

The core tenet of netnography is to comprehend the social and cultural dynamics that manifest in digital environments, with a particular emphasis on scrutinizing the behaviors and communications among members of online communities (Kozinets, 1998). This methodological framework allows researchers to acquire profound insights into group dynamics and the values that are esteemed by the community, thereby facilitating a more nuanced understanding of how disputes can be effectively navigated within a broader societal framework (Kozinets, n.d.).

Researchers are capable of discerning emerging patterns of interaction and their subsequent influence on the decision-making processes prevalent within the community. The importance of this methodological approach also resides in its capacity to elevate voices that might be marginalized in conventional discourses, thereby promoting a more inclusive and constructive dialogue (Runnels & Andrew, 2013). In this regard, comprehensive analysis can foster the development of more efficacious communication strategies and enhance cohesion among community members.

The netnographic methodology not only augments the comprehension of internal community dynamics but also establishes a robust framework for crafting interventions that facilitate conflict resolution and reinforce social bonds among members (Bowler, 2014; Sadovykh & Sundaram, 2017). Various forms of netnography exist, including virtual ethnography, which concentrates on interactions within digital realms, and participatory ethnography, wherein researchers actively immerse themselves in the community to attain deeper insights into their behaviors and values (Zarei & Rakhshani, 2015; Ivan, 2019). It is imperative to discern how each variant of netnography can be effectively applied across diverse contexts, ensuring that the findings significantly contribute to the formulation of policies and programs that are pertinent to the community.

The locale of netnographic data can be illustrated in the Figure 1.

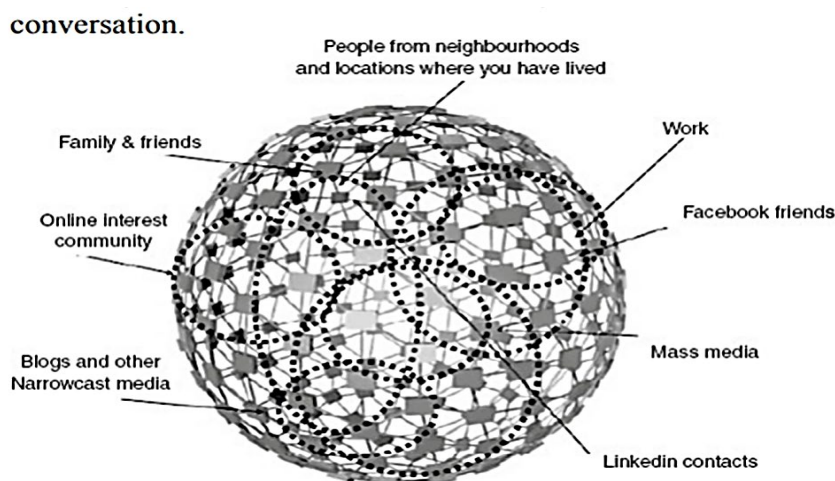


Figure 1. The locale of netnographic

Source: Kozinet, 1998

The depiction delineates an array of digital platforms that are frequently employed by communities for interaction, including but not limited to online forums, social media networks,

and instant messaging applications, each possessing distinct attributes that influence the dynamics of communication among participants.

The varieties of netnographic data can be discerned through the visual depiction presented in Figure 2.

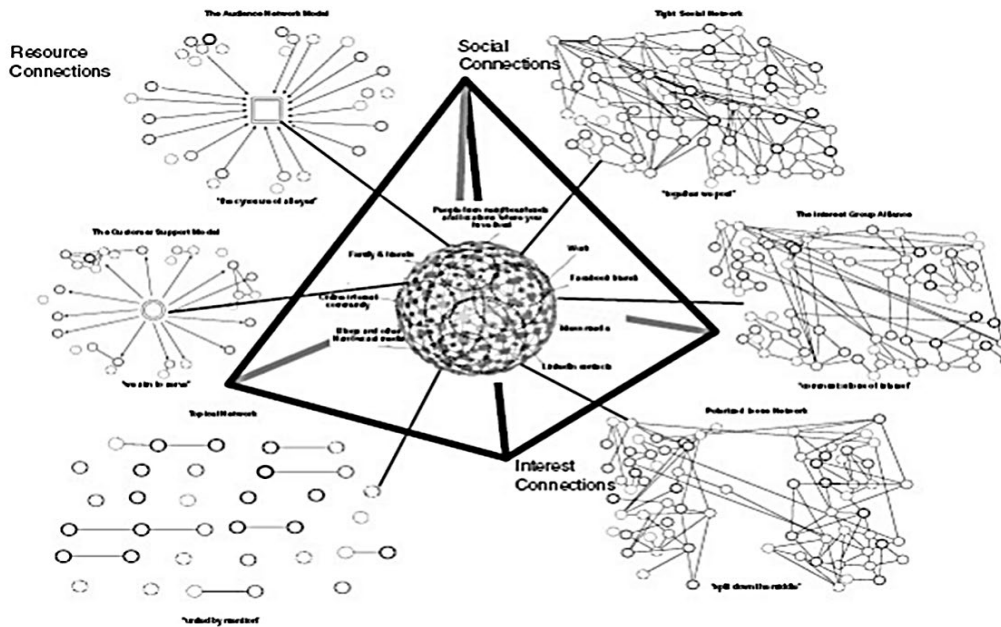


Figure 2. Social types of network

Source: Kozinet, 1998

This visualization elucidates the manner in which interactions across diverse platforms can yield a more profound comprehension of the social and cultural dynamics inherent within a community. Through the meticulous analysis of these interactional patterns, scholars are equipped to discern trends and pertinent issues relevant to the community, while concurrently gaining insight into the influence of technology on social relationships and cultural identity.

This examination not only provides valuable insights into community behavior but also contributes to the development of more efficacious strategies for engaging and interacting with community members in the future. Consequently, this methodology emerges as an indispensable instrument for researchers and practitioners in fostering a more nuanced understanding of the complexities associated with contemporary communication.

By employing this methodology, researchers are positioned to construct more precise models that predict social and cultural transformations in conjunction with the ongoing advancements in technology (Chen et al., 2021). These models further serve as evaluative tools for assessing the implications of public policies and social initiatives, thereby establishing a robust foundation for enhanced decision-making within the context of evolving communities.

METHOD

Research Methodology: A qualitative descriptive framework employing netnographic techniques. This methodological approach enables scholars to scrutinize interactions and behaviors within digital environments, revealing patterns that might elude detection in conventional research paradigms. Through the application of observational methodologies and content analysis, researchers are positioned to acquire profound insights into the modalities of individual interactions within online communities, as well as the determinants that shape social dynamics in the digital realm.

Table 1. Three YouTube accounts that pro Joko Widodo

No.	Channel Name	Administrator	Subscribers Count	Content Focus	Channel Link	Date Established
1	COKRO TV	COKRO TV	>2.38 million	Political analysis supporting the government	http://www.youtube.com/channel/UC1dx8HeC0DmLKAMun2fQJMA	Not Available
2	Zulfan Lindan Unpacking	Zulfan Lindan	>345K	Political discussions and government policies	https://www.youtube.com/@unpackingid	Not Available
3	Total Politik	Total Politik	>716K	Political discussions with a pro-government perspective	https://www.youtube.com/@TotalPolitik	Not Available

Table 2. Three YouTube accounts that oppose Joko Widodo

No.	Channel Name	Administrator	Subscribers Count	Content Focus	Channel Link	Date Established
1	Refly Harun Channel	Refly Harun	>1 million	Legal and political analysis	http://www.youtube.com/@reflyharunofficial	April 24, 2020
2	Rocky Gerung Official	Rocky Gerung	>1 million	Sharp critique of political dynamics	http://www.youtube.com/@rockygerungofficial	May 15, 2020
3	Akbar Faizal Uncensored	Akbar Faizal	>500 thousand	Political discussions with various figures	http://www.youtube.com/@akbarfaizaluncensored	June 10, 2020

Observation of Digital Interactions on Social Media

This research meticulously examines digital interactions within social media platforms, with a particular focus on the comments associated with YouTube channels that both endorse and

critique the governance of President Joko Widodo, who held office in Indonesia from 2019 to 2024. It employs archival data methodologies, leveraging pre-existing data derived from online communities prior to the initiation of the study. This dataset comprises publicly available posts, comments, conversational histories, and records of prior community engagements. This methodological approach facilitates access to historical data, thereby enabling researchers to analyze the progression of perceptions and discourses within the community. The insights garnered from this data collection are anticipated to provide a nuanced representation of the variances in perspectives and arguments prevalent in society regarding Joko Widodo's leadership, alongside an examination of how these variances mirror the broader public sentiment.

Analysis of Comments, Posts, and Narrative Content from Populist Leaders and Their Supporters

Through this analytical framework, researchers are positioned to discern the emerging communication patterns and rhetorical strategies employed by both factions in the construction and defense of their respective arguments. The study aspires to furnish profound insights into the social dynamics permeating society and to investigate how social media functions as a forum for public debate, reflecting a spectrum of interests and political ideologies.

Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis methodologies implemented in this investigation encompass qualitative analysis, specifically netnography, to systematically categorize salient themes and assess the emotional undercurrents present in comments and posts. The outcomes of this analytical process will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of how populist rhetoric shapes public opinion and galvanizes support, while concurrently illuminating potential societal polarization within an increasingly fragmented community.

Research Location and Subjects

The research focuses on digital platforms, specifically YouTube accounts owned by six content creators, to examine the factors influencing the effectiveness of digital communication in populist leadership and the impact of populist communication on social cohesion fragmentation in the digital era. Subjects: Populist leaders, their supporters, and the affected public. To ensure data validity, the study applies two validation techniques: source-based validation and theory-based validation.

Research Findings

The populist communication strategies employed by President Joko Widodo can essentially be observed through his language style, narrative, symbols, and digital media. More specifically,

his language style includes persuasive, interactive, informative & educational, and provocative elements. His narratives consist of expository, artistic, and suggestive aspects. The symbolic strategies involve social media interactions and personalized messaging. Meanwhile, his media channels are characterized by labeling opposing views as fake news, undermining credibility, and promoting constructive or positive messaging.

President Jokowi's communication strategy, which strongly emphasizes direct public interaction through *blusukan* (impromptu visits), has not always been received positively. Criticism of this approach highlights that while *blusukan* creates an image of closeness with the people, it is sometimes perceived as ineffective in addressing more complex issues that require deeper, well-planned policy solutions. This approach has sparked debates about balancing populist methods with the need for systematic, data-driven solutions.

The assessment of his provocative language style is particularly evident in the comments on the YouTube channel Rocky Gerung Official, which has 2.28 million subscribers. Some notable comments include:

"Many people were deceived by Jokowi, including myself. Save my Indonesia from the 'JOKOWI REGIME.' My mind is now open, and I can think freely because of Rocky Gerung. Thank you, stay healthy, Professor, keep criticizing and protecting our homeland from individuals who fail to uphold the constitution. Educate the nation and care for the poor. IDIDIDIDID" (@suburorganik6721)

"This is what happens when a leader is not trustworthy. Given responsibility but oversteps boundaries, issues regulations as he pleases, and violates laws just to maintain power, even though there are already clear rules based on the 1945 Constitution." (@davidanantoananto6666)

"As a result of an incompetent leader obsessed with wealth and praise, the people suffer. Corruption runs rampant, fuel prices rise, tuition fees increase, food prices skyrocket, taxes become unreasonable, the people are deceived, and religious tensions are manipulated." (@dimasramadhan9767)

A symbolic communication strategy can be seen in a commenter's suggestion that PDI-P (Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle) should be more objective in evaluating Jokowi's leadership style:

"This is like noticing an ant across the ocean but ignoring the elephant in front of you. Other people's mistakes are criticized loudly, but their own mistakes are ignored. PDI-P, be mature, introspect! Jokowi wouldn't have stirred things up if PDI-P hadn't started

the fire. He's not the type to seek conflict, especially with PDI-P. He's only reacting to Megawati's and PDI-P elites' insults, which is natural. As a man and a head of state, it's only right for him to defend himself.” (@harfiw.dtjenim3160)

“Instead of the PDI-P Secretary General criticizing Jokowi and Gibran every day, they should just be expelled from the party. It's exhausting to listen to. So noisy! If PDI-P doesn't want to expel them, it just proves they are cowards, afraid of damaging their reputation.” (@biestrinusantara712)

Various examples of comments related to President Joko Widodo's populist communication strategies illustrate that interactive communication always has a dual dimension. On the one hand, it aims to create an open communication space between the state leader and the people. On the other hand, it raises suspicions that such communication serves a specific agenda—potentially manipulating leadership failures through interactive communication strategies that elicit public sympathy. The visualization below clarifies that the communication strategies of populist leaders in the digital era carry various implications.

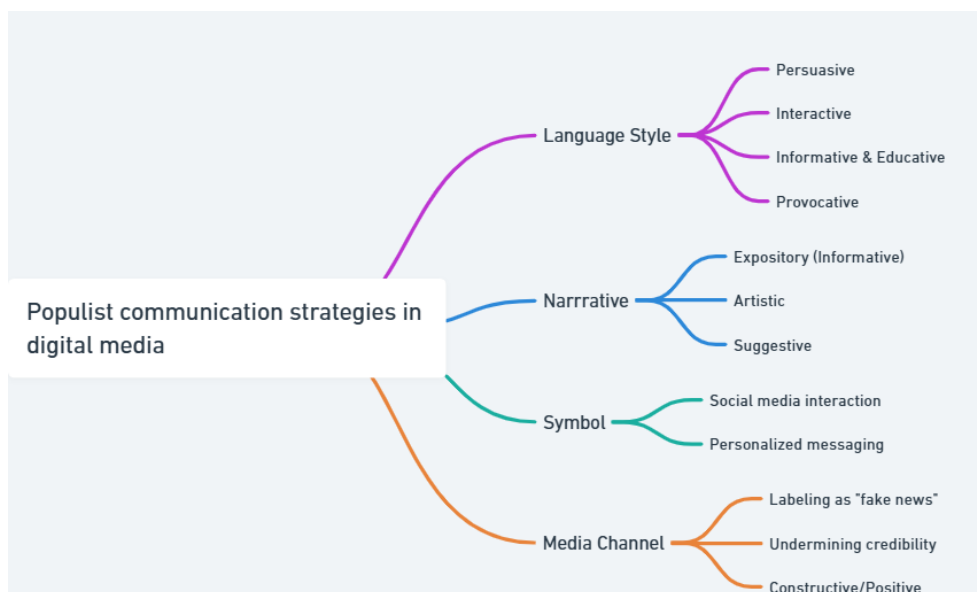


Figure 3. Populist leader strategies with various implications

Source: Researcher, 2024

The Impact of Populist Communication on Social Cohesion: Polarization, Conflict, or Superficial Solidarity

Populist leadership must be managed effectively. If not, there is a high potential for polarization, horizontal conflicts, and the formation of superficial solidarity. Effective leadership

must bridge differences and foster constructive dialogue among various societal groups to reduce conflict potential and strengthen unity amid diversity.

Inclusive and transparent leadership plays a crucial role in building public trust and encouraging active participation from all social elements in decision-making processes. Public involvement in this process not only strengthens social cohesion but also ensures that policies truly reflect the needs and aspirations of all segments of society. Therefore, it is essential for leaders to uphold values of tolerance and mutual respect in every decision, ensuring that collective goals are achieved without sacrificing the interests of specific groups. This can be further examined through the following comments:

“A sincere and kind-hearted person who helps others and holds no grudges will be rewarded abundantly by God. That’s what Prabowo is experiencing now.” (@Ismppt663)

“President Jokowi is not an absent leader. After planning and execution, he personally monitors the progress of his ministers. Social assistance funds have been allocated and distributed to the people to provide support. If you want to help people, become a president. Otherwise, just be a critic—because criticizing is much easier.” (@nakulasadewa9376)

These positive comments highlight that, as a populist leader, the primary responsibility is to maintain strong social cohesion in Indonesia’s diverse society. If not, negative implications may easily arise. Such concerns are clearly illustrated in the visualization below, depicting the impact of populist communication.

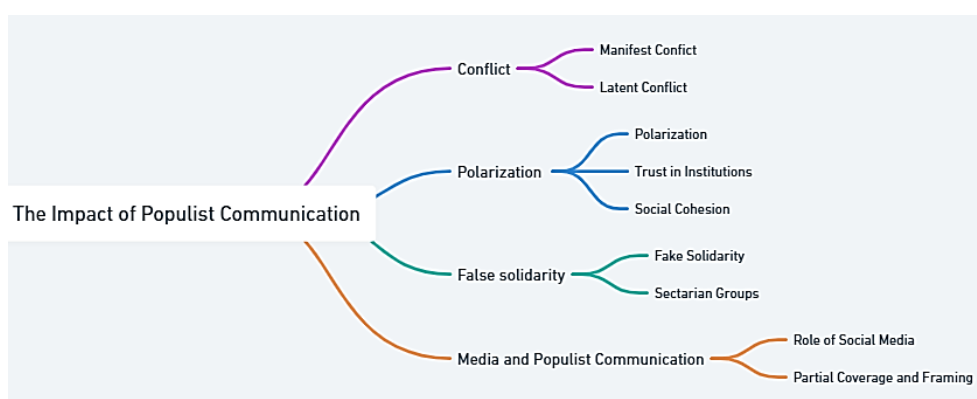


Figure 4. Image of the impact of populist communication

Source: Researcher, 2024

If not properly managed, populist communication can lead to conflicts, either in a manifest or latent form. Not only that, but it also has the potential to create polarization, false solidarity, and the misuse of media channels. This is where the importance of a collaborative and mutual

understanding approach comes in, ensuring that every individual feels valued and has a voice in their community's development. Leaders and the public can create an open space for dialogue where people can share their views and experiences, ultimately leading to more innovative and sustainable solutions to the challenges they face. Active participation from all parties will strengthen the sense of ownership and collective responsibility, which, in turn, can enhance the effectiveness of pro-public policy implementation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Theoretical Implications

On one hand, the role of populist leadership is pivotal in fortifying social cohesion within a community. Conversely, when a leader's personal ego becomes excessively pronounced and they prioritize solely their individual or their faction's interests, it can catalyze social fragmentation. The potential for such a risk is further exacerbated if the populist leader's communication strategy is ineffectively employed, as this can adversely affect interpersonal communication within the societal framework and culminate in sustained polarization among disparate societal groups.

Consequently, it is imperative to investigate innovative methodologies to enhance communication and interaction between populist leaders and societal members in an inclusive manner, while simultaneously promoting constructive interactions among various groups. The restoration of severed communication channels is of paramount importance. In this regard, should a populist leader successfully formulate an efficacious communication strategy that engages the public, the onset of social fragmentation can be averted. Conversely, a failure in this endeavor may lead to an escalation of distrust and conflict among groups, thereby exacerbating the prevailing circumstances.

For this reason, it is essential for populist leaders to embrace a transparent and inclusive methodology, ensuring that all stakeholders are actively engaged in the decision-making process to cultivate a sense of collective ownership and accountability within the society. By integrating a multitude of voices and perspectives, populist leaders can establish a more harmonious milieu wherein collaboration becomes the cornerstone for achieving shared objectives and mitigating intergroup tensions.

Thus, populist leaders should not merely concentrate on attention-grabbing rhetoric but also lay a robust foundation of trust through tangible actions and consistent policy execution. President Joko Widodo, in principle, has adeptly implemented these tenets by prioritizing open dialogue and incorporating public participation in a variety of developmental initiatives. A salient illustration of this strategy is the infrastructure development program, which actively solicits community involvement in both the planning and execution phases. This approach ensures that

local needs are comprehensively addressed, embodying two fundamental aspects of Nawa Cita: “sustainable development and equitable prosperity,” which aspire to engender social justice for all Indonesians.

Practical Implications

The practical ramifications of these findings encompass recommendations pertaining to digital policy and the management of public spaces, aimed at enhancing transparency and accountability within decision-making frameworks. In this regard, YouTube, as a media platform, assumes a pivotal role in fostering collective consciousness regarding the significance of social cohesion. Nevertheless, it also harbors the capacity to exacerbate polarization and social fragmentation should the actions of populist leaders be persistently misconstrued by the populace.

The discussions surrounding six YouTube channels—Total Politik, Cokro TV, Zulfan Lindan Unpacking, Refly Harun, RG Official, and Akbar Faisal Uncensored—pertaining to President Joko Widodo’s populist leadership communication strategies distinctly exemplify the inherent biases of each channel. Consequently, the three channels that oppose President Jokowi are predisposed to facilitate dialogues and forums that perpetuate narratives conducive to social fragmentation. Conversely, the three pro-Jokowi channels predominantly formulate narratives that bolster social cohesion.

Furthermore, cooperation among government entities, the private sector, and civil society is imperative for the formulation of innovative solutions that tackle the developmental challenges inherent in the digital age. These two dimensions not only fortify the foundational elements of infrastructure development but also promote active public engagement in decision-making processes that have direct repercussions on their lives. Involving diverse stakeholders in transparent dialogue guarantees that policies authentically mirror societal needs and aspirations, thus expediting the realization of sustainable development objectives.

CONCLUSION

The intrinsic connection between populist leadership and social cohesion in Indonesia constitutes an irrefutable empirical observation. In essence, President Joko Widodo’s populist leadership has profoundly influenced the enhancement of social cohesion. This assertion is substantiated by the discourses present in the comment sections of pro-Jokowi YouTube channels. In contrast, the polarization of social groups that engenders opinions conducive to social fragmentation typically corresponds with the narratives formulated and propagated by anti-Jokowi channels.

Consequently, the efficacy or ineffectiveness of populist leadership in the contemporary digital landscape is predominantly contingent upon the proficiency with which a populist leader

engages with—or is leveraged by—owners of digital platforms. As a pivotal political figure in Indonesia, virtually all of Jokowi's political and non-political endeavors receive extensive media coverage. Pro-Jokowi YouTube channels consistently offer affirmative support and critical analysis, whereas opposing channels frequently underscore deficiencies and limitations as fodder for critique.

Meanwhile, the social cohesion fragmentation triggered by populist leadership opens the potential for further polarization among societal elements. This condition must be mitigated early on to prevent it from escalating into a larger issue.

The limitations of this study lie in the scope of data, which is restricted to six YouTube channels. As a result, the analysis remains descriptive in nature. Further research is needed to explore a wider range of data sources that can provide deeper and more comprehensive insights into populist leadership from different perspectives.

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