The Use of Zoom and WhatsApp Applications as a Communication Bridge for the Indo-Red Army Bekasi Community in Forming Cohesiveness during the Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract.
This study aims to determine the use of Zoom and WhatsApp applications as a communication bridge in the Indo-Red Army Bekasi community in forming cohesiveness during the pandemic. The method used in this study is a descriptive qualitative method, with interview, observation, documentation and content analysis techniques for mass media. This research uses the concept of group cohesiveness to see how the cohesiveness exists within the Indo-Red Army Bekasi community during of the Covid-19 pandemic. The results of this research are that the chairman of the Indo-Red Army Bekasi community seeks to maintain communication and cohesiveness during the Covid-19 pandemic by using the Zoom and WhatsApp applications. The Zoom application is used for watching the Manchester United club game together online and having discussions after the game, while the WhatsApp application is used as a forum for communicating with all members and online meetings. By using these two applications as a communication bridge, they have formed solidarity and cohesiveness in the Indo-Red Army Bekasi community.

Keywords: football fan community, group cohesiveness, virtual communication media

1. Introduction

Football has fans all over the world. According to a survey by Nielsen Sport as mentioned by Arifianto [1], Indonesia ranks second in terms of the percentage of population who are football fans. That is, 77% of the total Indonesian population claim to like football. Indonesia is only surpassed by Nigeria, where 83% of the population are claimed as football fans. It is then interesting to see how football fans of European clubs gather to maintain group cohesiveness, especially in pandemic where they had been refrained from meeting together physically.

Fans are an important aspect of football. There is no specific evidence on when these supporters first appeared to support the existing team, but many accounts claim that
they were present when football was born. Returning to Europe’s plains, England, as the birthplace and growth of modern football, has become a country that is inextricably linked to the culture of its supporters. There are three countries in the world that have well-known supporters: England, Italy, and Latin America. Many additional groups of supporters throughout the world have embraced the lifestyle, attire, and enthusiasm of these three groupings of supporters. Hooligans from England, Ultra from Italy, and Barra Bravas from Latin America were the names given to these three gangs. What these three groups of supporters did was deemed over the pale by the general public; not a single person had a negative opinion of what they did both inside and outside the stadium. Their presence in their respective countries distinguishes them from earlier generations of supporters [2].

Football club supporters gave birth to many communities, demonstrating his affection for the club he supports. Community members will gather at viewing events to cheer on their favorite teams. The atmosphere in every activity will be full of enthusiasm and high loyalty from each community member to their preferred football club because of the community’s cohesiveness. A community is a group of people who share the same goal, care about one another, and share common interests. The binding force of a community, particularly in meeting common interests and needs in social life, is founded on cultural, ideological, and socioeconomic elements. To strengthen togetherness and cohesiveness so that the community can continue to function, the football community organizes activities such as watching together, gathering together, and participating in joint sports such as football or futsal, which are useful for strengthening friendships formed both among community members and with people outside the community [3].

The Indo Red Army community in Bekasi city supports the Manchester United football team by viewing matches together and developing relationships to strengthen group members. This pandemic has caused the Indo Red Army Bekasi community to shift from watching together (nobar) in public locations such as cafés or bars to watching streaming broadcasts at their own houses. Nobar is a crucial part of maintaining group cohesiveness, so the community adapted by conducting community activities from home, communicating with each other without having to meet face-to-face physically, but using virtual communication media, namely Zoom and WhatsApp applications. Communication is a crucial factor in the formation of cohesiveness. Healthy communication between group members will bring them closer together. Groups have attachments that are not just outside of group standards, but also from the heart of every individual who is a member of a group [4]. Building community cohesion is difficult, especially in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic, which requires people to stay at home. So the research
question is “How does Indo Red Army Bekasi use virtual communication media such as Zoom and WhatsApp to establish group cohesiveness during the Covid-19 pandemic?” Based on that research question, the purpose of this study is to examine the use of the Zoom and WhatsApp applications as a communication bridge in the Indo red Army Bekasi community in establishing cohesiveness during the Covid-19 pandemic.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Virtual communication media

When everyone cannot speak face to face due to the COVID-19 pandemic, they turn to virtual communication programs; virtual communication becomes a means of online meetings; and virtual communication makes it easier to communicate directly. Virtual communication is defined as a type of communication in which people communicate and engage with one another via various media using computers or phones and the applications embedded in them. Many people prefer to communicate with one another digitally, sometimes instead of in person. As a result of the advancement of Internet technology, the practice of interacting with others virtually emerged. Another distinguishing element of virtual communication is the absence of any structure in outer space. You can simply communicate with someone who lives in another city, nation, or even halfway around the world. Virtual engagement implies that both positive and negative aspects occur. Positive characteristics include the ability to completely express oneself, while negative elements include the development of a closed, sedentary lifestyle [5].

Virtual communication is a method of communication in which communications are delivered and received via cyberspace. In present era, people prefer virtual forms of communication, which can be accessed anywhere and at any time. The internet is one method of virtual communication. The internet is a very effective and efficient channel of communication that provides service facilities via text, voice, or video. In the real world, communication takes place directly (face-to-face) and involves symbols, signs, text, facial emotions, voice pressure, way of looking, body position, and so on. Virtual communication is used in many aspects such as education, health, and in organizations. In organizations, communication aids in the establishment and realization of the organization or community's goals and objectives; the management of people and material resources; and, finally, inspiring and creating an environment in which members can express themselves [6].
2.1.1. Zoom application

Virtual communication media includes applications developed for either exchange of text, voice, video, or a combination of both. One example is the Zoom application. Zoom is a web-based video conferencing platform that includes a desktop client and a mobile app, allowing users to meet online with or without video. Zoom users can record sessions, collaborate on projects, and share or comment on each other’s screens all from a single, simple platform [7]. Zoom is the best choice for conducting meetings because of its more complete features and services than other platforms. The development of the growth of zoom users continues to increase due to the outbreak of the covid-19 pandemic and government policies that require working from home. Zoom has features that include: a) High definition quality video and audio, b) ability to accommodate up to 1000 participants and 49 videos on the screen. c) Built-in collaboration tools where multiple users can share screens at the same time and co-author more interactive meeting notes with collaboration tools from the Zoom app, d) Security, as this application already has end-to-end encryption for all scheduled meetings of the zoom application, e) Recordings and Transcripts users can record their meetings with zoom and save them either on their respective devices or on a cloud account, f) Scheduling feature: this app also has a scheduling feature to start a meeting and integrated to Google or Outlook calendars, g) Chat features where conversation history can also be easily searched, integrated file sharing and archives can be stored for 10 years [8].

2.1.2. WhatsApp application

WhatsApp offers services in the form of text, photographs, videos, and audio in order to stay connected and socialize [9]. It is an excellent way to express feelings and emotions using text, videos, emoticons, voice messages, GIF files, and so on. WhatsApp is the most popular platform for internet messaging on smartphones, laptops, and other electronic devices. Under some consistent and dependable strategies, WhatsApp provides various features such as one-to-one messaging, group creation, free voice calls, free video calls, document sharing, status updates, WhatsApp stories, privacy settings, custom sticker creation, message broadcasting, and so on. Anyone with an internet connection can use WhatsApp at any time [10].

Communities extend their face-to-face, direct communication through virtual communication media in WhatsApp using WhatsApp groups. WhatsApp groups are organized as private chat rooms, usually around a certain topic, and are limited to 256 individuals.
who can participate in numerous topics at once. A group management, on the other hand, may opt to release an invitation link to join the group on websites and social networks, thus making the group public, as anybody with access to the link can join in and become a member. Groups are dynamic areas of conversation, with users coming and leaving at their leisure. Furthermore, there is no limit on the number of groups in which a user can engage at any given moment [11].

2.2. Group cohesiveness

Cohesiveness is the attraction between members, having the same goals and interdependence between members to achieve group productivity [12]. The impact of member cohesiveness is that the group can easily achieve the organization's objective. Cohesiveness is the degree to which group members adhere to a single entity that can manifest itself in a variety of ways and through a variety of causes, all of which contribute to the same end outcome [13]. One of the factors in encouraging group cohesiveness is the common interest in the individuals in the group.

Cohesiveness is defined as an essential trait in a group or one behaves like a group which has the following elements: solidarity, group spirit, morale and prayer [14]. Solidarity is a fundamental trait within a group. The word solidarity can be interpreted as a unity of interest, sympathy and so on. Meanwhile, according to Mohanty [15] solidarity is based on reciprocity, responsibility and recognition of common interests. Group spirit is a powerful motivator to collaborate more closely in a collegial setting or to collaborate with other individuals to achieve common goals. Meanwhile, group spirit as a component of work spirit that clearly reflects group symptoms and is one of the fundamental features of groups that enable them to collaborate and be socially responsible [16]. In terms of group cohesiveness, morale can be referred to as a sense of purpose or enthusiasm shared by members of a group [17]. Whereas prayer is defined as a spiritual essence and a relationship with God [18]. Prayer is also described as a deep human instinct at the heart of humanity when one discovers his or her connection to the source of life.

3. Methodology

This research utilized qualitative methodology with descriptive approach. Qualitative methodology is the preferred method of research when the issues in question are complex, involve variables or concepts that are difficult to quantify, or involve listening to populations that have traditionally been silenced [19]. Qualitative descriptive studies
focus on low-inference description which means lower levels of interpretation compared to grounded theory or phenomenology [20]. Thus, this approach was chosen as the phenomenon is still novel and so using descriptive qualitative approach will increase the likelihood of agreement amongst researchers.

Data collection techniques used in the research include observation and interviews. Observation was carried out by participating in Zoom meeting sessions of the Indo Red Army community and in WhatsApp group discussions as a non-participant observer. Semi-structured interviews were conducted on the chairman of Indo Red Army Bekasi community as key informant (Ferdy, male, 26 years old), and members of Indo Red Army Bekasi (Kevin, male, 25 years old and Arif, male, 24 years old). The Indo Red Army Bekasi community, based in the city of Bekasi, was formed in 2017 which was first presided by “Kang Opi”. The presidential leadership period in this community is for two and a half years, after that it was continued by “Bang Jaka” as president in the 2018 period until now. It is a regional branch of the Indo Red Army Indonesia. This community is a place for lovers of the Manchester United team in Bekasi, with this community to accommodate MU fans around the city where they live, they can be well coordinated. The community that usually gathers to hang out at the stadium cafe only now has 20 official members.

The data was then analyzed using qualitative data analysis method which includes data reduction, data display, and data verification to achieve a conclusion. The results of this study are a description of the results of observations, documentation and interviews that the author has done with several research informants. The author's stages of obtaining informants through observation, documentation and interviews on research topics to determine the use of zoom and WhatsApp applications as communication bridges to build cohesiveness in the Indo Red Army Bekasi community during the Pandemic.
4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Use of Zoom application

The Indo Red Army Bekasi community, which usually does watching activities together with all its members at the cafe, had to change course during the Covid-19 pandemic via online. The zoom application is a video conferencing service that is widely used by institutions, agencies, governments, schools, and companies in conducting online meetings. Zoom is the best choice for conducting meetings because of its more complete features and services than other platforms. The development of the growth of Zoom users continues to increase due to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic and government policies that require work from home (WFH) [8]. The Indo Red Army Bekasi community utilizes the zoom application for watching together or nobar. This is in accordance with the results of interviews conducted with Key informant Ferdy as follows:

“We use the zoom application as a means that this community can still be online even though we are online, we can still chat and discuss after the MU match is played, we can keep chanting even at home. Yes, even though they say this zoom application is for WFH or for schools, but if it can be used also for the community, then why not.”

Ferdy’s statement is reinforced by the results of the image below which explains that the Indo Red Army community is watching together and discussing online.

Zoom has featured that the Indo Red Army Bekasi community can use to carry out nobar activities (Figure 2). Although this application is mainly used for school activities, meetings or office activities, with this zoom application all community members can still feel the euphoria of the ‘nobar’, to discuss and yell chants even from their respective homes.

4.2. Use of WhatsApp application

The Indo Red Army Bekasi community during the Covid-19 pandemic tried to maintain online communication and interaction, this community used the WhatsApp application as a means of communicating and interacting with other members. WhatsApp is one of the most popular communication media today.

WhatsApp can be used as an alternative in gathering, in groups and in community. This application can conduct online conversations with many participants, enter text, voice, and video. WhatsApp is also a simple, safe and easy application because most people use the WhatsApp application [21]. In addition, the WhatsApp application is an
internet-based application that can be used as a communication medium, because it makes it easier for users to communicate with each other and interact without spending a lot of money in using it, because WhatsApp does not use credit, but uses internet data [22]. The Indo Red Army Bekasi community utilizes the WhatsApp application as a means of communicating and meeting online (Figure ??). This is in accordance with the results of interviews conducted by Key informant Ferdy:

“For the WhatsApp application itself, which we use on a daily basis, it’s like sending funny memes, then the guys want to joke or discuss about MU, before the pandemic, we definitely use WhatsApp too, and WhatsApp video calls are usually the meeting place for the committee. But it doesn’t have to be a committee either, even for members who want to join, let’s just say so.”

Ferdy’s statement is reinforced by the results of the image below that the Indo Red Army Bekasi community conducts online discussions and meetings through the WhatsApp application.

Based on the explanation above, the WhatsApp application is an application that is quite effective as a means of communication in the Indo Red Army Bekasi community. Even this community has been using this application since before the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition, this application group video call is used for online meetings of the management and some of its members.
4.3. Group cohesiveness

The Indo Red Army Bekasi community is always involved in activities linked to the Manchester United football team. During the COVID-19 pandemic, this community is attempting to keep their community active in supporting their idol club alongside other members. Based on the concept of group cohesiveness, there are 4 elements that include into the group community, namely solidarity, group spirit, morals, and prayer, that will be discussed in this section.

The Indo Red Army Bekasi community is trying to continue to carry out community activities even in the Covid-19 pandemic situation. With the activities carried out by the community, it can maintain cohesiveness in the community. This is stated by Ferdy (Key Informant, male, 26 years old):

“Yes, we are still fighting for this community to keep going during the pandemic, we use existing online applications such as the Zoom application and WhatsApp, that's all, so we can communicate and stay united.”

The results of interviews with researchers with Kevin (Informant, male, 25 years) as a member of the Indo Red Army Bekasi Community:
“I always participate in online activities and discuss the end of the MU match in the WhatsApp group. When I was on camera and turned on the sound to make it seem more alive, in the WhatsApp group I also joined in the chat. Apart from that, some of our friends were affected by the tragedy that their parents died from the Covid-19 outbreak, I also distributed the condolence donation for our friends’ families”

In addition, Arif (Informant, male, 24 years old) as a member of the Indo Red Army Bekasi community stated that:

“As a member, I maintain a sense of solidarity by participating in whatever the community does, bro. If I was asked to speak, I was asked to chant, I also chanted and if I was asked to have a meeting I sometimes joined in the meeting. Because our goal is to support MU together.”

It can be seen from the results of the interview that the community leader provided a solution for the running of this community in the midst of a pandemic by using the Zoom and WhatsApp applications. And other members participate or work together to keep the community running

The Indo Red Army Bekasi community works together to achieve common goals to enhance group spirit even in the Covid-19 situation. To realize it, everyone carries out their respective duties. It is stated by Ferdy that:

“We don’t do a lot of activities, we just stay at home, don’t we. For example, we are having an online show using the zoom application, later there will be a section that makes the room zoomed, then there are administrators who take care of the share screen section and then for members who have joined the group, I think this is a form of collaboration during this pandemic. My form of cooperation is as the opening of the event.”

The results of the researcher’s interview with Kevin as a member of the Indo Red Army Bekasi Community:

“For me, as an ordinary member, I only remind other friends in the WhatsApp group, for example, the Nobar event on Zoom is about to start. I mention my friends who may not have read the broadcast link from the group admin because if it’s more crowded, the nobar will be more fun.”

It can be seen from the results of the interview above that there are respective tasks in the community so that the online ‘nobar’ activities run smoothly.
4.4. Use of virtual communication media as a bridge for group cohesiveness

Based on the research findings, the Indo Red Army Bekasi community, which generally undertakes watching activities with all its members at the cafe, had to shift course during the Covid-19 pandemic to watch together online. The Indo Red Army community communicates within the community through virtual communication tools, specifically Zoom and WhatsApp. It can be observed that communication via the program is good, since it is not merely a passive receiver of information. They demonstrate good and communicative reactions, such as conversations, ‘nobar,’ and online meetings via the Zoom and WhatsApp apps. During the COVID-19 pandemic, this makes it easier for the Indo Red Army Bekasi community to interact and carry out activities via the application.

The findings of this study indicate that the Zoom and WhatsApp programs may be used to communicate during a pandemic, and that the Indo Red Army community can carry out activities while the pandemic is ongoing. The Zoom program is used to watch and discuss videos online with others. While the WhatsApp program is utilized as a medium for communication, community participation, and online meetings. Zoom is the finest choice for conducting online activities because to its more comprehensive features and services than other platforms. Because to the onset of the covid-19 epidemic and government rules that necessitate working from home, the number of zoom users continues to expand. When compared to other instant messaging apps, the use of WhatsApp is particularly effective due to the support of its features. Message speed with no long delays, ability to work in poor signal situations, high capacity for delivering text, voice, photo, and video data without advertisement interference. The results of this study are corroborated by previous research conducted by Ramadhani et al. [23], which shows that with the work from home policy, employees have a new communication pattern, specifically by leveraging information technology and virtual communication media during the pandemic. Virtual meeting communication technology, specifically the Zoom application, is one of the technologies that may be employed when working from home. Furthermore, it is reinforced by the findings of earlier research by Hasanah [24] on the effectiveness of virtual communication media for group communication during Covid-19 pandemic.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the Indo Red Army Bekasi community used the four components of group cohesiveness rather well, albeit some were less successful in implementation. The element of solidarity is positive because there is a sense of common goal when they use the Zoom and WhatsApp applications to carry out
community activities, sympathy for community friends who have been affected by COVID-19 by distributing condolence donations, and a shared interest in supporting their idol club. Following that, the aspect of group spirit was deemed positive due to the cooperation between the chairman and members in achieving common goals. Furthermore, the moral element may be deemed less successful because the community merely gives rules that should not be broken and does not provide positive examples for all community members to follow. Furthermore, the prayer element is deemed less successful because not all members attend the room in the Zoom application during online ‘nobar’ and WhatsApp sessions on time when the group stands together in prayer.

5. Conclusion

The following conclusions can be taken from the previous section’s research and debate. Using the Zoom and WhatsApp programs, the chairman of the Indo Red Army Bekasi group hopes to maintain contact and cohesiveness during the COVID-19 pandemic. After the Manchester United club game, the zoom application is used for online talks and discussions, whereas the WhatsApp program is utilized as a forum for connecting with all members and holding online meetings. They were able to build cohesiveness in the Indo Red Army Bekasi community by using these two applications as a communication bridge.

6. Authors' Contributions

1. AAA contributed to data collection and writing the report

2. HSH contributed to literature review, data analysis and writing the report

3. WY contributed to literature review, writing and proofreading final manuscript

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