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Social Media and Impression Management of Governors During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract. The COVID-19 pandemic has placed enormous demands on leaders in the public sector. Regional politicians have two interests: conveying information related to handling the pandemic and convincing the public that they are competent in handling the crisis. Through impression management on social media, regional leaders seek to achieve these two goals. This study aimed to find out what impression management tactics were used by regional heads in Indonesia during the pandemic through social media. This study used the Leader Impression Management Framework to analyze the contents of posts on the official Instagram accounts of four governors in Indonesia, namely West Java Governor Ridwan Kamil, DKI Jakarta Governor Anies Baswedan, Central Java Governor Ganjar Pranowo and East Java Governor Khofifah Indar Parawansa, during the early period of the pandemic. The results showed that the four governors used impression management tactics in varied ways, but there were similarities in the main tactics used to manage their impressions. The findings raised theoretical and practical implications about the leaders' methods of communication to the public during the pandemic.

Keywords: social media, impression management, leadership, governor, pandemic

1. Introduction

Covid-19 pandemic has placed great demands on leaders in the public sector. The large-scale outbreak and the uncertainty faced make it difficult for leaders to cope with. This outbreak is characterized as a landscape-scale crisis which can be interpreted as an unexpected or major event occurs with extraordinary speed, causing a high level of uncertainty that causes disorientation, feelings of loss of control, and strong emotional disturbances (1).

On the one hand, many state leaders are trying to formulate an accurate recipe to prevent this spread of epidemic. On the other hand, many leaders fail to formulate mitigation strategies, and this has an impact on trust issues between the government and the community, including in Indonesia. Keep in mind that there is no single "correct" formula for winning this battle. The opponent that the government has to face is a virus

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growing continuously and for which we need an appropriate approach to overcome it (2).

In every crisis, leaders are demanded to be more intense in communicating to the public either directly or through the media. Impression management is needed in a crisis situation by the leader to show that the situation is under control and all is safe to the followers. Impression management strategies are common in organizations facing serious crisis events that can significantly damage their reputation (3). Leader communication plays an important role in convincing and maintaining public trust amid a pandemic. The hope for the leader is so great, to be able to resolve the pandemic crisis. In this situation, regional leaders who are also politicians have two interests at the same time: informing about the handling of the pandemic and convincing the public that they are competent in handling the crisis.

In this context, the impression management framework is appropriate to use, because any moment for politicians is also a political marketing tool allowing politicians to address the demands of society. Political rhetoric, appearance characteristics, and perceived personality are, without a doubt, important aspects of shaping political impressions (4).

The increasing number of internet users shows their involvement in various fields, including in relation to the fields of political communication and government. One form of political communication practice often encountered is election campaign. The Internet is used by many candidates and their campaign directors as a channel to spread their programs. A study conducted by Stier and his colleagues related to the 2013 German election campaign found that politicians use Facebook and Twitter for different purposes, based on audience characteristics and sociotechnical environment (5).

However, the use of social media in the communication process in elections raises challenges related to political advertising, as well as the rules that can regulate these challenges. Another challenge is related to the existence of gatekeepers who actually play a very important role in disseminating information using the media, because this matter will lead to journalistic ethics in the end (6). The political campaign aims to increase the popularity of politicians in order to increase votes in elections. On the other hand, in relation to increasing popularity, improving one's potential becomes one thing to consider. One way to improve self-potential is to show a positive self-impression.

In the context of communication science, studying impression management strategies is closely related to the Self Presentation theory initiated by Erving Goffman. Goffman uses theater metaphors to explain how communicators present themselves. Every day in everyday life is like a theater stage and people who live their daily lives are analogized to actors who play a certain character to make the audiences impressed. One of the

important concepts in Self Presentation theory is impression management, where one of the concepts used in this regard is self-presentation (7) context of interpersonal communication, such as that of Gino and his colleagues. The study linked self-image with the preferences of the interlocutor and found that someone who pays attention to the preferences of others so that they often do not show their true identity in general tends to feel more worried during interacting with other people (8).

In the context of political communication, the strategy of showing a positive impression in the eyes of voters is inevitable. Albalat-Mascarell and Carrio-Pastor have conducted studies related to self-representation to increase the impression of candidates in political campaigns in America in the 2016 election and in the eyes of voters, especially in televised debates. His research found that the use of self-mention is one of the strongest personal rhetoric in both the context of academic discourse and its role in self-construction. Furthermore, Republican candidates were found to use more self-mention than their competitors (9).

In particular, the pandemic crisis presents the phenomenon of social distancing as well as various mobility restrictions, so that digital communication media becomes a major need. Likewise with public leaders, social media is one of the priority media to reach the public. Moreover, currently internet users also increase in number continuously. At the beginning of this year, around 4.5 billion people worldwide were internet users, with 59% penetration and 3.8 billion social media users (10). In line with the development of internet users in the world, Indonesia is also experiencing similarly. Around 171 million Indonesians have access to the internet with 64.8% penetration (11).

For that reason, this research wants to know how the public communication strategy of regional heads in Indonesia during the Covid-19 pandemic, especially through social media, is an interesting and important phenomenon to study. How they use impression management in social media communication during a pandemic, becoming a mixed arena between the interests of handling the pandemic and the interest of convincing the public that they are competent to handle the crisis. From the description above, the formulation of problem in this study focuses on: what are impression management tactics used by 4 (four) regional heads during the pandemic through Instagram social media? and How are the messages conveyed by the governor's account through impression management tactics on social media during the pandemic?

Impression management can be defined as a process used by individuals who seek to control others' impressions on them (12). Being viewed positively by others will benefit individuals and in a political context will bend the distribution of profits in their favor

(13) developed a self-presentation strategy consisting of five tactics: ingratiation, self-promotion, intimidation, exemplification, and supplication. Ingratiation is a behavior used by actors to make themselves look more attractive and liked by others; Self-Promotion tends to present actors as highly competent, with regard to certain skills or abilities; Exemplification features behavior that presents the actor as morally worthy; and can also be designed to gain follower support; Intimidation is related to behavior that displays actors as powerful people who are capable and can give sanctions to the public; while supplication shows a position of helplessness and asks others for help.

(14) explore the extent to which these five strategies are associated with transformational leadership at the world-class level. The results show that exemplification and ingratiation are positively related, whereas self-promotion and intimidation are negatively related to perceptions of transformational leadership, leader effectiveness, and follower satisfaction. (15) said that individuals with high self-monitoring types are usually good at reading situations and adjusting appearance and behavior to suit each situation. Whereas, individuals with low self-monitoring types tend to present a self-image is consistent with their personality, regardless its impact on them, beneficial or detrimental. Impression management is fake unnecessarily, but care must be taken not to appear insincere or manipulative. In highly uncertain situation such as a pandemic, leaders must be more careful to avoid misstatements or blunders.

Hall in (16) emphasizes on the importance of impression management as the control over others' behavior for its own sake which is achieved by influencing the definition of situations in which everyone is involved. This is achieved by acting in such a way that the image created by the actor (and associated objects) leads others to voluntarily act in the actor's favor. Impression management not only pays attention to what is said but also what is not said. In other words, impression management refers to what conclusions the people draw from nonverbal appearances and actions and also what control is placed on inflow and outflow of information.

(17) added that the use of social media as an impression management tool has several advantages, including: following the logic of media synchronicity theory (18), several aspects of technology are beneficial for impression management. The two main antecedents in media synchronicity theory, rehearsability and reprocessability, both relate to asynchronous communication, where the sender and the receiver can think of more carefully in processing the message being communicated.

Other research has shown that individuals can manage self-presentation more strategically in online settings than in face-to-face settings (19). Another problem associated with impression management via social networks is the relatively permanent message

of the identity being communicated. (20) highlighted the ability to record, where past interaction activities, personal information, and other data are recorded long-term and accessible to other members of the public.

Previous studies, for example (21), found that different impression management strategies were used by organizations in dealing with crises. Different impression management strategies occur in messages directed to different stakeholders. Another study conducted by (22) finding that exemplification is a predictor of group cohesiveness, feelings about group member relationships and decision-making processes, and feelings about group decision outcomes. Ingratiation impression management tactics were positively related to group cohesion. Meanwhile, the Supplication tactic is negatively related to feelings of uncertainty group members, relationships and decision processes.

2. Methods

This research was conducted using a content analysis design on Instagram social media used by 4 (four) governors in Indonesia: Ridwan Kamil (@ridwankamil) as West Java Governor, Anies Baswedan (@aniesbaswedan) as DKI Jakarta Governor, Ganjar Pranowo (@ganjarpranowo) as Central Java Governor, and Khofifah Indar Parawansa (@khofifah.ip) as East Java Governor. The election was based on the fact that the epicenter of Covid was Java Island (23) and the four governors were said to have the potential to run as presidential candidates in the 2024 presidential election (24) (25).

Data was collected from posting accounts of the 4 (four) figures during March-May 2020. Each post (photo and narration) was grouped into five categories of Leader Impression Management (14) (22). This research uses thematic unit of analysis. The thematic unit itself is one of the units of analysis in which the author reads and concludes what the theme is in the content (26). In this unit of analysis, the focus is what the text is talking about. The unit of analysis in this study is counted as one upload, which is a combination of captions and photos.

The reliability test between coders using the Holsti formula obtained a reliability coefficient (CR) of 0.84. Furthermore, cross tabulation was carried out for impression management tactics between each governor. In order to find out whether or not the difference in impression management carried out by each governor has a significant value, the researcher uses the Chi Square statistical test. The salient findings in each category were then analyzed qualitatively.

3. Results and Discussion

The results showed that the four governors' Instagram accounts were used consistently to communicate to the public during the pandemic. As of October 2021, West Java Governor Ridwan Kamil's Instagram account (@ridwankamil) has 14.5 million followers and 7,206 posts; DKI Jakarta Governor Anies Baswedan's (@aniesbaswedan) has 5.2 million followers and 3,634 posts; Central Java Governor Ganjar Pranowo's (@ganjar_pranowo) has 3.9 million followers and 4,818 posts; and the Governor of East Java Khofifah Indar Parawansa's (@khofifah.ip) has 928 thousand followers and 3,024 posts.

In uploading photos and captions on Instagram, the four governors used various impression management techniques. It can be seen that during the initial period of pandemic, exactly March-May 2020, the @ganjar_pranowo account posted the most, which was 346 posts (40.1%), followed by @khofifah.ip with 254 posts (29.4%), @ridwankamil with 174 posts (20.2%) and @aniesbaswedan with 89 posts (10.3%).

From these uploads, exemplification is the tactic used most dominantly by the four governors, in 532 uploads (61.6%); ingratiation tactic in 143 (16.6%); supplication in 81 (9.4%); and the least used is self-promotion tactic, in 43 (4.9%) uploads. The frequency description for the impression management category for each governor is shown in table 1.1 below:

TABLE 1: Frequency Distribution of Use of Impression Management Tactics on Instagram Account

Impression Management	Anies Baswedan	Ridwan Kamil	Ganjar Pranowo	Khofifah Indar	Total
Exemplification	41	108	230	153	532 (61.6%)
Self-Promotion	3	14	5	21	43 (4.9%)
Ingratiation	13	26	62	42	143 (16.5%)
Supplication	17	8	21	18	64 (7.4%)
Intimidation	15	18	28	20	81 (9.4%)
TOTAL	89 (10.3%)	174 (20.2%)	346 (40.1%)	254 (29.4%)	863

(source: data processed by researchers)

Furthermore, based on the results shown in Table 1.2, a different test was carried out using chi-square, where the calculated chi-square value was 49.525 with a degree of freedom (df) of 12. Meanwhile, the results of the chi-square table were based on a significance level of 5 percent and a degree of freedom 12 was 21.03. These calculations show that the calculated chi-square is greater than the chi-square table, so there are

significant differences in each of governors' Instagram account in the use of impression management tactics.

TABLE 2: Chi-Square Test Impression Management Tactics on Governor's Instagram Account

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	49.525[a]	12	.000
Likelihood Ratio	46.246	12	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	7.700	1	.006
N of Valid Cases	863		

Based on the frequency table described in Table 1.1, it can be seen that all governors use the five existing impression management tactics. Even if it is seen from the table, all governors mostly use exemplification management tactics. However, if examined more deeply, each governor uses different sub-tactics. The example category itself has nine sub-tactics: a) Willing to make personal sacrifices for the benefit of others; b) Being generous with time and energy in helping others; c) Maintaining a high standard of personal performance; d) Behaving in a manner consistent with the expectations of others; e) Leading by example; f) Being kind personally to others; g) Demonstrating a high level of disagreement/conflict; h) Presenting oneself as warm and charming to others; i) Praising others' ideas or works.

The Governor of Central Java, Ganjar Pranowo, mostly uses the example category as his impression management tactic. Out of 346 uploads, 230 (43.2%) fall into the sample tactics. Even so, Ganjar Pranowo mostly uses the "leading by example" sub-tactic if it is traced around what sub-tactics are used the most. This is because there are 81 (35.2%) uploads with this sub-tactic, viewed from a total of 230 uploads falling into the sample tactic. Some of Ganjar Pranowo's uploads related to this sub-tactic include tips from health workers (Indonesian: *tenaga kesehatan* or called *nakes*) reposted by Ganjar Pranowo on his personal Instagram account. In addition, most uploads are also centered on one of the programs he initiated, namely Jogo Tonggo. The program was created to make people care about each other during the pandemic. In addition, this program also supports regions to play an active role in maintaining the welfare of their surroundings, for example in villages cultivating vegetable crops, shared kitchens, and so on. Ganjar Pranowo himself raised content about activities carried out by villages in Central Java for Jogo Tonggo, which could be imitated (emulated) by other communities. In addition, when the issue of infectious COVID-19 corpses was buzzing among the

crowd, Ganjar Pranowo also actively shared videos from experts, from health experts to religious experts, so that people would not refuse the bodies to be buried around the community. Ganjar Pranowo himself is actively sharing uploads in the form of examples, to make it easier for his followers to apply on Instagram, who are also mostly residents of Central Java. People also tend to be more receptive to the message in question if they use an example or someone who is an expert in their field is speaking.

Ridwan Kamil also uses exemplification tactics. The governor of West Java uploaded 174 posts in a period of three months, 108 (62 percent) of which were included in the sample tactic. Examining more deeply, out of the 108 uploads, 45 uploads (41.6%) are included in the sub-tactic of "maintaining personal performance with high standards" or it can be said that most uploads are in this sub-tactic. Some examples of uploads about these sub-tactics include social assistance that will be distributed soon, Ridwan Kamil's visit to ensure that infrastructure for hospitals is achieved, and updates on the distribution of social assistance, medical equipment, and other primary needs. Ridwan Kamil uses the sub-tactic of "maintaining personal performance with high standards" more to emphasize the results of what he has done to eradicate this pandemic. In short, Ridwan Kamil wants to prove his "real work" through this sub-tactic.

Similarly, DKI Jakarta Governor Anies Baswedan also uses example tactics (40 uploads) most frequently, especially the sub-tactic of "maintaining personal performance with high standards" with 15 uploads or 37.5%. Some examples of these uploads are how Anies Baswedan informed updated data on the DKI Jakarta COVID-19 website, distribution of social assistance, as well as Anies Baswedan's visits to such places as self-isolation booths and distribution sites for social assistance. Through these sub-tactics, the message and impression emphasized by Anies Baswedan is how he, as the Governor, plays an active role personally and "goes down the mountain" in tackling the pandemic.

Likewise, Khofifah Indar Parawansa, the impression management tactic that the Governor of East Java uses most frequently is exemplification (153 out of 254 uploads). However, in contrast to Ridwan Kamil and Anies Baswedan, the sub-tactic that Khofifah uses most frequently is "to present oneself as warm and charming to others". This sub-tactic was found in 49 out of 153 (32%) posts. Some of these uploads can be seen from how Khofifah holds religious activities such as online *tadarus* and *tausyiah*, as well as motivation. Khofifah herself emphasizes a religious image, where the message conveyed is more directed at the community to not only take care of themselves and obey health protocols, but also surrender themselves to God.

The exemplification tactic also has the most sub-tactics so it is used fairly evenly by the four governors. Starting from "willing to make personal sacrifices for the benefit of others"; "behaving in a manner consistent with the expectations of others"; "being kind personally to others"; to "being generous with time and energy in helping others" governors use quite a lot in their Instagram posts. This sub-tactic shows governors are willing to help their people who are struggling with the time and energy they have. Being generous with time can be shown by trying to promote something on their Instagram, while being generous with energy is by going directly to helping the people. For example, in one of Ganjar's uploads (May 14, 2020) promotes *gemblong*, a food made by mothers in Semarang. The video in the post shows Ganjar enjoying *gemblong* snacks that have a variety of foods and are put in a *besek* (container made of bamboo). The seller's contact is also written in the video caption, so that other people can participate in buying gemblong promoted by Ganjar. Anies (30 May 2020) also promoted the Instagram Live event with the Sumatran Orangutan which will be held on Instagram @ragunanzoo. In addition to promoting the event, Anies also invited the public to stay at home and be entertained with the Instagram Live event on the @ragunanzoo account.

Other sub-tactics that governors use quite often in their posts, namely "maintaining personal performance to high standards" and "Leading by example" showing a lot of direct performance of the governors and how they contribute to various existing problems and programs. Khofifah's upload (March 2, 2020) in this subcategory shows that mask assistance for Indonesian citizens from East Java who are in Hong Kong has arrived. This upload is included in the subcategory of performance with high standards, because in this upload Khofifah wants to keep her citizens safe in a pandemic situation, even though they are outside Indonesia. Meanwhile, Ganjar's upload (May 29) in this subcategory shows that Ganjar is directly checking the preparations for the New Normal which will be held in Central Java. The video upload shows that Ganjar checks how the health centers have implemented strict health protocol rules.

The governors also show various good behaviors so that they can become role models to the community. In addition, in this subcategory the governors show various examples related to various problems existing in the community and can help the community solve the problem. An example of a governor's upload in this subcategory can be found in Anies Baswedan's upload (May 24, 2020). The upload shows that Anies is celebrating Eid al-Fitr at home, because he is currently in a pandemic situation. The photos and captions that Anies uploaded show that as a leader he sets an example by holding Eid celebrations at home. This subcategory is shown by Ganjar (11 May) by

showing that one of the furniture factories in Demak keeps producing even though it is in a pandemic condition. Ganjar shows a good example for other factories to keep operating by using strict health protocols such as the furniture factory in his upload. The sub-tactics of "demonstrating high level of disapproval" "presenting oneself as warm and charming to others" and "commending other people's ideas or work" were rarely found in all governors' posts.

Another impression management tactic used by governors is supplication. This category was quite a lot done by governors during the Covid-19 pandemic, the majority of whom asked the community for helping each other in dealing with the pandemic. The sub-tactic of "emphasizing dependence on others for help" is quite common in every governor's post. In pandemic conditions, the governor emphasized dependence on the community and asked the community for help to obey health protocols, stay at home, and take care of health. He emphasizes the dependence on the community to be able to help each other, solidarity and mutual cooperation. Another sub-tactic is to emphasize personal shortcomings while asking for help; underestimating personal ability to get help from others and acting stupidly to get help from others are not found in the governor's upload.

Although the tactics of coercion (intimidation) are rarely used, several uploads have been found by the governor forcing his people to follow the recommendations or rules that have been made. The most frequently used sub-tactics are "explaining that the decision must be followed" and "threatening to impose some sanctions to those who oppose". These two sub-tactics are quite widely used by governors, recalling that the pandemic is an urgent event and some regulations must be obeyed. The decision to follow this command tends to use a firm word, no longer pleading but commanding. One example is seen in Khofifah's upload (March 24, 2020) with a coercive caption: "If you are still stubborn, get ready to deal with police officers like in Tulungagung". Ridwan Kamil (March 24, 2020) also did the same thing by affirming the caption with a capital letter, such as "PLEASE OBEY AND IMPLEMENT THIS DIRECTION." Ganjar Pranowo (March 25, 2020) has also applied this sub-tactic several times. In addition to the emphasis on captions, Ganjar's own Instagram posts emphasize more on videos. The video shown by Ganjar, in addition to the content of the message to be conveyed, the facial expression and firm tone of voice also strengthens the subcategory that his decision must be followed.

Anies Baswedan (March 2, 2020) also uploaded several posts that emphasized this subcategory. Anies' uploads usually place more emphasis on appeals, but use several sentences implying that the rules must be followed, such as "The DKI Jakarta

Provincial Government will not issue new permits for crowd." Meanwhile, the sub-tactic of "threatening to impose severe sanctions to subordinates/community members who oppose the directives" can be found in several uploads related to the threat of sanctions, for example for violators of the rules of Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB). The other three sub-tactics are: "demanding respect from others"; "threatening the people who do not live up to the leader's expectations"; and "publicly mocking those who oppose him", were not found in all governors' posts.

The Ingratiation tactic is used by the governor to express his appreciation and gratitude for the figures or the people around them. This category has been uploaded quite a lot by the Governors, because quite a lot of figures and the public have helped in handling Covid-19. Appreciation is also given to figures or people who have achievements in their respective fields. The three sub-tactics used most frequently are "flattering others about their appearance and behavior"; "making non-work-related compliments to others"; and "asking about daily life with community members". Whereas, the sub-tactic of publicly expressing agreement while privately disagreeing" is very rare.

From the results of this study, it can be seen that the four characters tend to avoid self-promotion tactics consisting of sub-tactics: a) receiving praise for past and current success; b) boasting achievements to others; c) showing achievements to others; d) taking advantage of opportunities to demonstrate skills/ability and e) using status symbols to communicate position and power. In self-promotion tactics, governors display the results of their achievements during their tenure, both personal and regional achievements. These achievements are related to the handling of pandemic and to the affairs beyond the pandemic.

This result is understandable because in a pandemic crisis situation it is not appropriate to stand out explicitly because we have to be empathic more with the public's misery. Thus, the four figures tend to use example tactics to show their competence more subtly to be acceptable to the public. Exemplification also highlights behavior that presents actors as morally appropriate and also to gain follower support; positively related to perceived leadership; and predictor of group cohesiveness (13,14,21).

4. Conclusion

The results show that the four governors use impression management tactics through Instagram accounts in various ways, but they have one thing in common, namely that all dominant governors use exemplification tactics in managing their impressions. On the other hand, the four figures also minimize the use of self-promotion tactics to avoid

blunders in the form of blasphemy from the public. However, they can still display their work and gain moral support from the public through exemplification tactics.

From the high number of uploads made by each governor, with an average of 2.4 uploads per day, social media Instagram has become one of the main communication tools used to reach the public during the pandemic. A number of social media characters are indeed beneficial to the management of impressions of public figures so as to strengthen these choices, in addition to social distancing conditions that limit face-to-face communication. Furthermore, the impression management tactics via social media can be used in various ways by regional leaders according to the conditions occurring, so as to strengthen the credibility of leaders and public compliance, especially during crises.

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