

## A Picture Speaks a Thousand Words: Crisis Communication and Image Making of Indonesian Public Leaders on Instagram

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**Dewa Ayu Diah Angendari**

Universitas Gadjah Mada

Jl. Socio Yustisia, Bulaksumur, Yogyakarta 55281 - Indonesia

Corresponding author: [dewaayu@ugm.ac.id](mailto:dewaayu@ugm.ac.id)

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### Abstract

During crisis, such as Covid-19 pandemic, public leaders are expected to be able to provide information that explains the situation at hand to the affected public while at the same time giving psychologically comforting messages. Nevertheless, a crisis can also be seen as a political event. Political actors use crisis as a momentum to change policies, gain support, and strengthen their positive image by showing off their capabilities in handling crisis. The absence of media gatekeeper in digital realms provides wider opportunities for political actors to set their agenda. Previous research found that Instagram is an effective medium to disseminate health-related messages and provides a platform for political actors to engage with their followers. Hence, this study seeks to understand how public leaders communicate crisis on Instagram. This research uses content analysis method by taking data from the Instagram of four prominent public leaders in Indonesia during the period from February 29 to May 29 2020. Findings show that all the four public leaders are actively uploading social media content during the beginning of the pandemic, focusing on showcasing their efforts to fight the virus, demonstrating leadership, proximity, and intimacy towards their followers. This study contributes to the study of crisis communication by providing understanding about the use of crisis as an image-making momentum in social media by public leaders.

**Keywords:** Covid-19; crisis communication; crisis exploitation; instagram; public leaders.

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### Introduction

Since the government announced the first confirmed Covid-19 case in Indonesia, there have been several initiatives taken by the government to communicate the virus to citizens across the country. These initiatives come both from central and regional government levels, involving various stakeholders, including celebrities, health workers, civil society organization, and the media. Communication between the government, health workers, academics, media,

and community leaders can be a way to carry out an effective response during a pandemic (Wang, 2020). This collaboration is important to increase the reach and accuracy of public health messages (Lin et al., 2014).

At the same time, as the pandemic forces to shift majority of public activities from offline to online sphere, it is not surprising that *we are social* (2021). There is an additional 10 million social media users in Indonesia between January 2020 and 2021. Another survey from (Nielsen, 2020) also found that social media

and online search sites were the most frequently accessed sources of information to get the latest news related to the pandemic. WhatsApp becomes the main channel of information, followed by Instagram and Facebook. This finding shows that social media holds critical role as a medium to convey messages to the public regarding the pandemic.

The critical role of social media is not only the result of its high penetration among citizens. A research from Guidry et al., (2017) suggests that the use of social media, especially Instagram, can be a powerful medium to deliver message during a health-related crisis on a global scale. The research argues that Instagram enables the communicators to build colourful and interactive communication which provides a higher level of engagement than other social media. This finding corroborates a research conducted by (Houts et al., 2006) which shows that a combination of images and text has the advantage of attracting attention, helping to remember, and building understanding of information related to health education. The effectiveness of Instagram is also supported by the emergence of social media influencer as a central figure to move public opinion. These influencers are able to lead public opinions in the digital space by transmitting information to a large and anonymous audience (Romo et al., 2020). They are seen as having knowledge and experience on certain topics, as well as the ability to influence the attitudes, decisions, and behaviour of followers.

On the other hand, Boin et al., (2009); Olsson & Nord, (2015) argue that crisis is not neutral. Instead, crisis can also be viewed as a political event. Crisis disrupts the routines and expectations that exist in society. At the same time, it opens up political space for actors who have interests, both inside and outside the government, to redefine existing issues, propose policy innovations and organizational reforms, gain popularity, to attack actors opposite them (Boin, 'T Hart, et al., 2009). For individuals, large-scale crises also have political implications for the individual's career, either encouraging or weakening his current position (Olsson et al., 2015). Thus, political actors may use crisis as a momentum to make meaning with its prospects, promote their political career, seek supports for policies, attack opponents by showing their ability in handling crisis.

In light of Covid-19 pandemic, there has been a growing body of knowledge related to crisis communication strategies, the role of social media, to leadership during a crisis. In Indonesian context, previous researches are showing similar findings that communication regarding Covid-19 pandemic is political (Hermawan, 2020; Syahputra et al., 2021). For example, at the beginning of the pandemic, there was a heated debate on Twitter whether Indonesia should impose a lockdown. This debate was polarized between groups supporting and opposing the lockdown and later developed into quarrels between Jokowi's and Anies Baswedan's supporters who created a black and white dichotomy between pro and anti-lockdown. The government was also using buzzers to resist opinion who support a lockdown and bully actors who argue otherwise.

However, there has been limited research that focus on analysing the intersection between crisis communication and political image-making. Therefore, this study attempts to fill the gap by examining crisis communication of four public leaders in Indonesia by asking two questions. *First*, what message does these public leaders attempt to communicate through its Instagram account? *Second*, to what extent these political leaders use Instagram to exploit crisis messages?

As a limitation, this article is analysing official Instagram account of four prominent public leaders in Indonesia. The four public leaders are President Joko Widodo (@jokowi), West Java Governor Ridwan Kamil (@ridwankamil), DKI Jakarta Governor Anies Baswedan (@aniesbaswedan), and Central Java Governor Ganjar Pranowo (@ganjar\_pranowo). These four figures were chosen because the regions they lead are among the top five regions with the highest number of Covid-19 spreads in Indonesia. The four of them are also active on social media and have a large number of followers with a total of 60.5 million people. In addition, the three governors are believed to run for president in 2024.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### *Crisis Communication and Image Making*

Crises are characterized by high levels of uncertainty faced by the affected public and strong negative emotions such as fear, distrust, and anger (Boin et al., 2009; Covello, 2003). On a larger scale, crises that affect the wider

public can also delegitimize existing power and authority because the public wants structural change (Klein, 2007). This then poses a challenge for effective communication.

One of the responses and follow-ups needed is communication on the crisis facing the organization. (Sturges, 1994) explains that there are 3 (three) types of messages that can be given by organizations when facing a crisis, namely instructing information, adjusting information, and internalizing information. *The first type of message*, instructing information, provides information to the affected public about the actions that the public can take when a crisis occurs. The message conveyed can be in the form of information about what crisis is being faced, where and why the crisis occurs, and how to deal with it. *Second*, adjusting information contains information that helps the public to deal with a psychological crisis. Organizations inform messages containing corrective actions or steps they are taking to minimize the impact of the current crisis and the potential for crises to recur in the future. The purpose of this type of message is to provide psychological security for the public because the public perceives that the crisis is under the control of the organization. *The last type*, internalizing information, is used to save the reputation of the organization. This message is conveyed when the crisis curve has sloped and aims to improve relations with stakeholders.

In the context of the health crisis, (Lim et al., 2017) argues that crisis communication has an additional purpose, namely to invite the public to adopt a healthy lifestyle. Meanwhile, Petersen (2020) introduced the concept of optimistic anxiety. People must be vigilant enough to follow the government's advice, but still optimistic enough to feel that their behaviour can make a difference. In addition, (Jacobsen & Vraga, 2020) recommends three strategies to improve communication during the pandemic. *First*, acknowledge the uncertainty caused by the crisis. Neglecting this can actually destroy public trust or create panic. *Second*, contextualization of data to help improve public understanding of the current crisis. *Third*, providing a narrative to compensate for misinformation that can be done by actors who have credibility in the health sector.

Public leaders play a crucial role in disseminating message during a crisis. When a crisis occurs, political leaders, both in power

and in opposition, have the opportunity to feel worried or hopeful (Boin, 'T Hart, et al., 2009). Crisis could change public sentiment and the map of political power beyond their control, give opportunities for the opposition to do blame games which may have bad impact on these actors. At the same time, the majority of crises that occur are political events that put pressure on political leaders, both in terms of decision-making and communication skills (Olsson & Nord, 2015). However, public leaders also have the opportunity to get a better position, such as increasing their political career because they are considered capable of handling crises both technically and symbolically because they are able to accommodate situations full of uncertainty and despair. Using their behaviour, examples, and words, public leaders can influence individuals' beliefs and behavior (Ajzenman et al., 2020). They can also use their influence to disseminate evidence-based information and shape public opinion which consequently affect public policies (Rufai & Bunce, 2020).

Crisis is also a process of making meaning as it provides platforms for political actors to communicate persuasive narratives (Boin, et al., 2009). This narrative contains an explanation of the current situation, the causes of the crisis, the consequences, solutions, parties who can assist in the recovery of the crisis, and those who are responsible for the occurrence of the crisis. In the process of making meaning, public leaders form coalitions or compete with other political actors in shaping the public's view of the current crisis. As (Castells, 2013) noted, "only those who can convey their messages to the citizens have the chance to influence their decisions in ways that lead to access to power position and/or maintain their hold over political institutions."

#### *Crisis Communication on Instagram*

Instagram is a platform for sharing photos and videos as well as social networking media (J. D. Guidry et al., 2015). In their research, Malik et al., (2021) implies that Instagram is an effective platform in crisis communication because it is able to reach a wide public, creating engagement through the involvement of celebrities who are seen as credible by their followers. During a crisis, the use and participation of social media by the community has increased. Social media users see that the information provided on social

media is more credible than the information provided through traditional mass media (Procopio & Procopio, 2007).

In terms of political image-making, (Russmann et al., 2019) through their study revealed that the use of images and videos on social media platforms such as Instagram provides flexibility for political parties to more easily framing, filter, and edit both before and after content is distributed. These features are lacking in traditional communication medium, such as posters, television, or newspaper. A research on Singaporean politician demonstrated that politicians who upload more public life on Instagram have more positive character perceptions than politicians who upload content containing private life (Jung et al., 2017).

Due to the nature of social media platforms, users prefer personal and intimate content from politicians and expect content that shares the politician's life as an individual rather than as a politician (Bene, 2017). Personalizing self-profiles through social media can make politicians look closer to the public, although this strategy can also be counterproductive because politicians can be seen as less serious and distracting from substantial issues such as views on certain policies. Research from (Ekman & Widholm, 2017) states that Instagram can be seen as a platform for politicians to create visuals that show their professional, personal, and private sides through various daily activities. Unlike the traditional mass media, politicians can freely create content according to their wishes and interests. Communication can also become more personal so as to create a more authentic and intimate communication culture (Graham et al., 2018).

In light of Covid-19 pandemic, there has been a growing body of knowledge related to crisis communication strategies, the role of social media, to leadership during a crisis.

### **Material and Methodology**

This research is employing content analysis to see the types of messages conveyed by government leaders through their Instagram accounts. Considering that the early phase of the crisis is a critical phase of delivering information and limiting research resources, this article examines data since the National Disaster Mitigation Agency (BNPB) established a certain status of a disaster

emergency, namely from February 29 to May 29, 2020 (Arifin, 2020)

Only content related to Covid-19 is collected in this research. The data is in the form of account names, visual content, audio visuals, and uploaded texts, upload dates, and the number of likes and comments. All data were collected manually by 4 (four) research assistants. The total number of Instagram posts that were collected was 660 (n=660) posts with account details of @Jokowi with 137 posts, @aniesbaswedan with 74 posts, @ganjar\_pranowo with 311 posts, and @ridwankamil with 138 posts.

This study uses Berelson's unit of analysis categorization, namely making the post displayed by the four public leaders as the unit of analysis. The uploaded image or itext in this study is referred to as a post and the description of the image or caption that will be used as the unit of analysis. For posts that have more than one image or carousel, the research will focus on the first image or the second image if the first image is just a cover image not followed by additional information. Next, the research categorizes the data that has been collected.

Later, researcher designed a coding protocol to see the variables studied with definitions and examples of each variable. All indicators are coded based on the presence of messages containing the variables studied with the number 1 (there is a variable) and the number 0 (there is no variable). Researchers will use post as the main unit of analysis. If an image or text is found in a post that contains one of the variables, then the entire post will be marked with the number 1. If one sentence is later found in the caption that indicates a trend towards one variable, then the entire post will be marked with the number one.

Posts that were collected were then coded by four research assistants independently. Before coding, all research assistants were first trained for 90 minutes to understand research, variables, and how to code. The researcher also prepared a coding protocol that contained categorization, sub-categories, and examples of information included in each sub-category. This is intended to ensure the same understanding between coders. Next, the researcher then prepared a coding document to be filled in by the two coders.

In the early stages, the four research assistants were asked to pilot code 20 posts

from each Instagram account. After that, the four researchers were again invited to discuss the results of the coding as well as to revise the coding protocol that had previously been prepared. In the next stage, the research assistant was again asked to code for 50 posts and continued with the third discussion. Finally, the research assistant continued coding for all existing posts.

*Data Analysis*

The research will analyze the entire Instagram content that has been collected so that it will use descriptive data and not statistical analysis. To answer questions related to message types, this study will use the categorization proposed by (Sturges, 1994) and the sub-categories developed from similar research by (Covello, 2003), (Seeger et al., 2020), (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014), and (Vos & Buckner, 2016).

**Table 1.** Type of crisis messages

Type	Description	Themes
<i>Instructing information</i>	provide information to the crisis-affected public about the actions that the public can take when a crisis occurs. The message conveyed can be in the form of information about what crisis is being faced, where and why the crisis occurs, and how to deal with it.	Informative: explanation of the disease, who has the potential to be affected by covid, rules related to PSBB, case statistics, Call to action: New normal instructions, health protocols, travel ban.
<i>Adjusting information</i>	contain information that helps the public to deal with a psychological crisis. Organizations convey messages containing corrective actions or steps they are taking to minimize the impact of the current crisis and the potential for crises to recur in the future. The purpose of this type of message is to provide psychological security for the public because the public perceives that the crisis is under the control of the organization.	Straightening disinformation, Health workers' readiness, PPE, hospitals, vaccines, data that the handling of covid in Indonesia is relatively good compared to that of other countries, sloping mortality rate, government work meetings.
<i>Internalizing information</i>	Aim to save the reputation of the organization. This message is conveyed when the crisis curve has flattened and aims to improve relations with stakeholders.	Jokowi asked other countries to cooperate in handling Covid; citizens' initiatives to help others.

Source: Sturges (1994), Covello (2003), Seeger, et. al (2009), CDC (2014), and Vos&Buckner (2016)

As for self-portrayal and connectivity, this research develops from research

instruments that have been carried out by (Poulakidakos & Giannouli, 2019).

**Table 2.** Politician Self-portrayal on Instagram

Type	Description	Example
<i>Profesional</i>	Present oneself as part of a public organization.	State activities, giving messages as public leaders, wearing government attributes.
<i>Personal sphere</i>	Demonstrate competence and personality.	Maaruf Amin as Islamic leaders, Terawan as a doctor.
<i>Private life</i>	Shows activities as a family member, past and future visions, leisure time, and love life.	Picture with family in home setting.

Source: (Poulakidakos & Giannouli, 2019)

**Table 3.** Connectivity on Instagram

Type	Description	Example
<i>With other politicians or government agencies</i>	Shows togetherness, interactivity with other politicians.	Politicians, political parties, government officials.
<i>With media professional</i>	Together with the media crew, involved in press releases	Press release
<i>With non-political actors</i>	Together with important non-politician figures, ie celebrities, professionals, international institutions.	WHO, epidemiologist, celebrity.
<i>With the citizens</i>	Portray interactivity with the citizens.	Citizens
<i>Self as center</i>	Only show a picture of oneself without anything else.	Self-portrayed

Source: (Poulakidakos & Giannouli, 2019)

In addition to this categorization, the research will also look at the content that receives the most likes and comments to evaluate what types and formats of messages draw the most attention from the public.

**Result and Discussion**

During a crisis, communication carried out at the beginning of the emergency is a crucial moment. During this period of time, there are growing uncertainties and pressures on the impacted public. Thus, it is necessary for the public leaders to provide accurate and responsive information to minimize the

uncertainties and control the risks. Based on the results of data collection, the four public leaders actively provide information related to Covid-19 through their personal Instagram accounts. In general, each public leader uploads at least one posts related to Covid-19 on daily basis. The account of @ganjar\_pranowo uploaded the most content, far surpassing the other three figures, with 311 posts. The @aniesbaswedan account recorded the least number of uploads, with 72 posts. Meanwhile, @jokowi and @ridwankamil have relatively the same number of content.

**Table 4.** Accounts' detail

Account's name	Total Posts (n=)	Followers (per 30 Sept)	Number of likes (n=105.259.380)	Number of comments (n=2.164.169)	Median likes	Median comment
@Jokowi	124	42.3M	67.398.069	1.072.263	424.935	5.614
@aniesbaswedan	72	5.2M	4.637.844	159.367	43.053	1.238
@ganjar_pranowo	311	3.9M	14.324.548	334.105	32.788	681
@ridwankamil	138	14.4M	18.898.919	598.434	113.363	3.063

Source: researcher



**Figure 1.** @jokowi's post that got the highest number of likes and comments related to Indonesia's participation in the G20 Summit

Source: Instagram @jokowi



**Figure 2.** @aniesbaswedan's post that got the highest number of likes and comments related to the provision of PPE in DKI Jakarta Province  
Source: Instagram @aniesbaswedan



**Figure 3.** @ganjar\_pranowo's post with the highest number of likes related to the supervision of reports on the handling of Covid by the ranks of the Central Java Provincial government and the highest number of comments related to school closures during the pandemic  
Source: Instagram @ganjar\_pranowo



**Figure 4.** @ridwankamil's post with the highest number of likes and comments related to mask production in West Java Province  
Source: Instagram @ridwankamil

In terms of followers, @Jokowi is the most popular account with more than 42 million followers, followed by @ridwankamil with 14.4 million followers, @aniesbaswedan with 5.2 million followers, and @ganjar\_pranowo with 5.2 million followers. Although @ganjar\_pranowo account has the least number of followers, the account owned by the

Governor of Central Java has the highest number of posts. Meanwhile, the engagement rate (the median number of likes and median comments compared to the total number of followers) for each public leader is relatively the same at around 1%.

Of the four public leaders analyzed, they generally show the same message distribution

pattern. Emphasis is given to the various handling efforts that have been carried out, followed by information related to health protocols (*prokes*). Among others, the Governor of West Java @ridwankamil posts information related to handling the most frequently. Whereas @aniesbaswedan gives the largest portion of information related to *prokes*. Among the posts, it seems that public likes the type of message which highlights the efforts taken to overcome the pandemic, such as the production and distribution of PPE, high level officials meeting, and policies.

Nevertheless, these four public leaders only give a small portion of content to explain the Covid-19 disease and the situation being faced by the public. This distribution pattern is also in line with the previous research related to crisis communication conducted by the Ministry of Health and the Covid-19 Task Force in the same period (Angendari, 2021).

Most of the contents shared on its social media account provide information about various initiatives taken by the government to handle the crisis. Meanwhile, information that explains the nature of the virus is limited.

In dealing with a crisis characterized by high uncertainty, (Petersen, 2020) suggests the need for optimistic anxiety. It refers to a situation where people must be alert enough hence they obey and follow the advice of the government, but still optimistic enough to feel that their behavior can make a difference. As leaders, the four of them have provided a lot of information related to the processes and measures taken to reduce the negative impact of Covid-19. However, it is equally important for public leaders to provide more information explaining the Covid-19 disease itself. Hence, it may persuade the public to adopt the recommendations to comply with the health protocols.

**Table 5.** Message Distribution Pattern

Category	@Jokowi	@aniesbaswedan	@ganjar_pranowo	@ridwankamil	Total (%)
<b>Instructing</b>	<b>19 (15%)</b>	<b>33 (49%)</b>	<b>92 (30%)</b>	<b>32 (23%)</b>	<b>176 (27%)</b>
Health protocols	18 (14%)	29 (40%)	76 (24%)	30 (22%)	153 (24%)
Information on Covid-19	1 (1%)	1 (1%)	10 (3%)	2 (1%)	14 (22%)
Others	0	3 (4%)	6 (2%)	0	0
<b>Adjusting</b>	<b>74 (60%)</b>	<b>33 (46%)</b>	<b>211 (58%)</b>	<b>73 (53%)</b>	<b>391 (61%)</b>
Crisis handling	55 (44%)	24 (33%)	131 (42%)	69 (50%)	279 (43%)
Emphaty & apreciation	12 (10%)	4 (5%)	55 (18%)	1 (1%)	72 (11%)
Policy	18 (14%)	5 (7%)	25 (8%)	3 (2%)	51 (8%)
<b>Internalizing</b>	<b>31 (25%)</b>	<b>7 (10%)</b>	<b>24 (8%)</b>	<b>34 (25%)</b>	<b>96 (12%)</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>311</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>645</b>

Source: researcher

Based on the next category, namely self-portrayal, it can be seen that the four public leaders associate their accounts with their professional work and affiliations with their institutions. President @jokowi's account, for example, always shows himself as a state official and never uploads content that shows his private side as an individual outside his

office or political affiliation. The same pattern is also reflected in the other three public leaders. Although several times the accounts of @aniesbaswedan, @ganjar\_pranowo, and @ridwankamil have shown their private side, but the number is very small compared to posts that show their formal positions.



**Table 6.** Self-portrayal Distribution

Category	@Jokowi	@aniesbaswedan	@ganjar_pranowo	@ridwankamil	Total (%)
Profesional	124 (100%)	70 (97%)	305 (98%)	106 (77%)	605 (94%)
Personal	0	0	0	27 (20%)	27 (4%)
Privat	0	2 (3%)	6 (2%)	5 (3%)	13 (2%)
<b>Total</b>	124	72	311	138	645

Source: researcher



**Figure 5.** @aniesbaswedan's post featuring family in the atmosphere of Eid  
Source: Instagram @aniesbaswedan



**Figure 6.** @ganjar\_pranowo's post featuring himself, his wife, and children in a more relaxed atmosphere  
Source: Instagram @ganjar\_pranowo

However, @ganjar\_pranowo account seems to have a different strategy. It was found several times that even though the Governor of Central Java Province did not use professional attributes in his content, but the caption or context of the uploaded images and videos showed his capacity as a governor. In some of his posts, @ganjar\_pranowo is dressed in casual t-shirt while giving directions to his subordinates. Posts with this pattern have several times received positive reactions from followers.

Next, in terms of connectivity, each public leader has his own style. President @jokowi, for example, most often presents himself without the company of other actors. In

some occasions, the Indonesian President's account tends to show his connectivity with the public and celebrities. However, he rarely captures himself together with other political actors. Even @jokowi account never seems to capture himself with Vice President Maaruf Amin.

On the contrary, @aniesbaswedan tends to upload pictures showing himself working with other politicians. He rarely uploads photos showing himself alone. On the other hand, accounts @ganjar\_pranowo and @ridwan\_kamil tend to have an even distribution. Both of them have uploaded photos of themselves several times, but more often show their interactions with other actors,

whether they are politicians, the public, or celebrities.

In the context of crisis exploitation, connectivity with other actors can show how these public leaders demonstrate their position. (Veneti et al., 2016) proposed that uploading selfies can be seen as a new style of communication that shows closeness and intimacy with the followers. Selfies can be shown either in a professional setting while on duty or in private. This is different from the traditional representation of political figures shown in conventional media which mostly capture the formal professional setting. The type of selfie upload also resembles a celebrity culture where content uploaders must constantly provide information in turns between their professional duties, personal information, and create an intimate and authentic self-representation with their

followers (Ekman & Widholm, 2017). In addition, connectivity with other actors can show openness and trust with their followers. Research from (Drylie-Carey et al., 2020) on crisis communication of public leaders in Europe via Twitter suggests that images showing a leader surrounded by other people in the context of a situation such as an office, newsroom, or public space convey the image of a strong leader to followers. As a president, @jokowi is showing himself as a single actor with the highest power in various public policies taken. Meanwhile, the other three public leaders may be showing their closeness to the community, attempt to win trust in the community, their capacity in handling the pandemic, and the leadership by coordinating with others.

**Table 7.** Connectivity Distribution

Category	@Jokowi	@aniesbaswedan	@ganjar pranowo	@ridwankamil	Total (%)
Politician	13 (10%)	53 (74%)	78 (25%)	33 (24%)	177 (27%)
Media	2 (2%)	1 (1%)	9 (3%)	14 (10%)	26 (4%)
Non-politician	24 (19%)	11 (15%)	81 (26%)	54 (39%)	170 (26%)
Citizens	23 (19%)	5 (7%)	107 (34%)	24 (17%)	159 (25%)
Self	62 (50%)	2 (3%)	36 (12%)	13 (9%)	112 (17%)
<b>Total</b>	124	72	311	138	645

Source: researcher

## Conclusion

Crisis situations are characterized by high uncertainty. In a situation like this, public leaders are expected to be able to provide information that provides not only an overview to the affected public of the situation at hand, but also a message that can provide psychological peace to the public. (Sturges, 1994) explains that there are 3 (three) types of messages that can be conveyed, namely instructing, adjusting, and internalizing information.

On the other hand, research also demonstrates that crisis can also be seen as political events (Boin, 'T Hart, et al., 2009; Olsson & Nord, 2015). Crisis change routines and political maps as well as opens up space for various actors who have interests. A crisis can be carried out by the incumbent to gain support for the policies made and strengthen his positive image if he is able to demonstrate his ability to manage the crisis well. Crisis moments can also be used by the opposition or other political actors to advance their political

careers and opportunities to appear in public spaces.

The presence of social media, especially Instagram, opens up this space even wider. In the context of crisis communication, Instagram is seen as being able to convey crisis messages more effectively than other social media platforms. This is because Instagram is specifically designed for images and explanatory texts at the same time. Meanwhile, in the context of political communication, the absence of a gatekeeper as in traditional mass media, allows public leaders to be able to design their messages specifically and allow direct communication with their followers. Instagram as a visual symbol can function as an argument, have agenda setting functions, dramatize policies, encourage emotional appeal, build candidate images, create identification, connect symbols in society, move audiences, and add ambiguity (Schill, 2012).

The four political leaders who are the object of this research have a unique position.

On the one hand, they are public leaders who are expected to be able to respond to crises. Especially with the large number of followers on Instagram, they have the opportunity to provide an understanding of the current situation to the public and invite the public to adopt health protocols. On the other hand, four of them are active political figures. Crisis provides space to show a positive image, get support, and get closer to the community.

In terms of type, self-portrayal, and message appeals, these four public leaders have the same pattern. Emphasis is given to current and existing treatment efforts (adjusting information). The four also gave recommendations regarding health protocols, empathy and appreciation for the affected public. This is certainly important to relieve anxiety and help the public calm down psychologically and invite the public to adopt a healthy lifestyle. The four also often show their connectivity with other politicians to show the scope of critical handling or the community to show their closeness and expression of sympathy for the impact felt by the community. However, a larger portion is needed for information related to the crisis at hand (Petersen, 2020).

From the perspective of the crisis as a political event, the four public leaders use Instagram regularly to convey various messages in relation to Covid-19. At least, these public leaders upload at least one piece of content a day. In fact, the @ganjar\_pranowo

account can upload between 3 to 4 posts in a day. Regarding the content of the message, the emphasis on handling Covid-19 can also be seen as an effort to show an image as a good crisis manager to the public.

Regarding connectivity, each public leader has his own pattern. President @jokowi tends to show himself without being connected to other political actors. Meanwhile, the other three public leaders tend to show their connectivity. This also shows how three of them want to show their position as a leader as well as their closeness to the community. Meanwhile, @jokowi with a fairly large number of followers tends to be eager to show himself in the vortex of crisis management in Indonesia.

This research still has many limitations. First, the data collected in this study is relatively short. Further research is needed regarding crisis messages and the use of crises as a communication medium for political actors. Moreover, the Covid-19 pandemic has been running for more than a year. Of course, there may be differences in the pattern of communication between these public leaders. Second, the data collected is also still relatively limited in terms of public leaders and social media analyzed. Further research can also look further into the forms of communication carried out by other political actors as well as their application in various social media to see the diversity of characters of social media users in Indonesia.

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