

Audience Polemic Toward President Jokowi's Policies on Facebook

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Abstract—Jokowi's and the government's policies addressing the COVID-19 pandemic have generated positive and negative reactions among social media users. The government/President Jokowi's policies are considered slow, indecisive, disorienting, changing, and confusing to the public. This study aims to uncover and interpret the significance of social media users' acceptance of President Jokowi's policies in addressing COVID-19. The research uses cultural studies, reception analysis, and text analysis theories. The study's findings reveal that individuals from diverse backgrounds, such as lecturers and researchers, despite having the same profession, interpret President Jokowi's leadership status differently on social media. The community perceives several presidential/government policies as irrelevant and lacking strategic value. The community expects strong leadership in handling a crisis as big as COVID-19. Some informants like and believe in President Jokowi's leadership style, while others believe in the government/president but hope for more strategic public policies. However, some informants who do not hold this belief view the policy as inappropriate, not strategic, and merely an image. In order to confront the COVID-19 pandemic as a national disaster, all country components must build collaboration and solidarity through appropriate policies.

Keywords: policy-Jokowi, receptions analysis, audience, Facebook, COVID-19

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A. Introduction

Numerous arguments support and oppose the mindset and strategies of the Government of the Republic of Indonesia under President Jokowi's leadership. One of them is President Joko Widodo's (Jokowi) policy to break the chain of the spread of the Jokowi government's policies, which are considered slow, indecisive, disoriented, and changing between the statements of the president and the ministers. The key to handling this widespread

pandemic is leadership. On the one hand, the state must be present to guarantee the safety, health services, and daily needs of the Indonesian people, both those infected with COVID-19 and the general public affected by the spread of COVID-19.

Policy-making requires the use of authority, particularly following the global outbreak of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic (Wiryawan, 2020). The Indonesian people need the right policy because

the COVID-19 pandemic has devastated people's lives, health, and economy. (Muhyiddin, 2020) asserted that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused a shock to Indonesia's economic growth, characterized by a decline in business activities, particularly in regions like Jakarta that implement PSBB, as well as other areas where the number of COVID-19 cases has escalated at the provincial, district, and city levels.

The government issued numerous laws related to the COVID-19 pandemic, subsequently refining them with policies and considerations for the necessary actions and possible outcomes (Wiryawan, 2020). The various forms of presidential policy in the context of COVID-19 demonstrate the quality of President Jokowi's leadership. Whether inadequately qualified or firm, this leadership sparked a debate among social media audiences, including users. The media and public criticism primarily focused on two issues: the government's slow response and the lack of transparency in data regarding the spread of COVID-19¹

Several policies have caused pros in society, including social media users, such as the Large-Scale Social Restrictions (Indo: PSBB) policy and guarantees of basic community needs, prohibitions on going home or returning to the village, providing Personal protective equipment (PPE) for doctors and medical personnel, and cutting teacher and education allowances. At the same time, the construction of the new capital city continues amidst COVID-19 and several other policies. According to the local government implements various policies to prevent the spread and impact of COVID-19, ensuring the steps are measurable and capable of predicting its effects.² A leader must adopt the appropriate policy as a crucial step in developing

a vision and mission, establishing objectives, formulating strategies, and devising methods to effectively and efficiently accomplish organizational goals.³ In this context, leadership quality is critical to achieving a shared mission and vision and overcoming changes in the external environment.⁴ The debate over the president's or government's policies has evolved into a discussion on various social media platforms, including Facebook.

Media messages convey meaning for the audience, including messages in social media account statuses used to assess policies to overcome the COVID-19 pandemic. Crises situations evaluate leaders' competence in developing strategic and focused policies that guarantee public safety and protection by the state. Social media, including Facebook, often debates the government's indecisiveness, particularly the president's role as the supreme commander of the Republic of Indonesia. Mobile phone users in Indonesia have reached 338.2 million in the age range of 16 to 64 years. Of that number, the percentage of users who access YouTube reaches 88%. The most frequently accessed social media after YouTube is WhatsApp at 84% and Instagram at 79%. Indonesians spend 3 hours and 26 minutes on average accessing social media. The total number of active social media users is 160 million, or 59% of the total population of Indonesia. 99% of social media users surf the internet using mobile phones (databooks.metadata.co.id, 2020).

The number of social media users is increasing, resulting in changes in the style of production, distribution, and use of media and information. The table below shows the number of social media users in Indonesia in 2019:

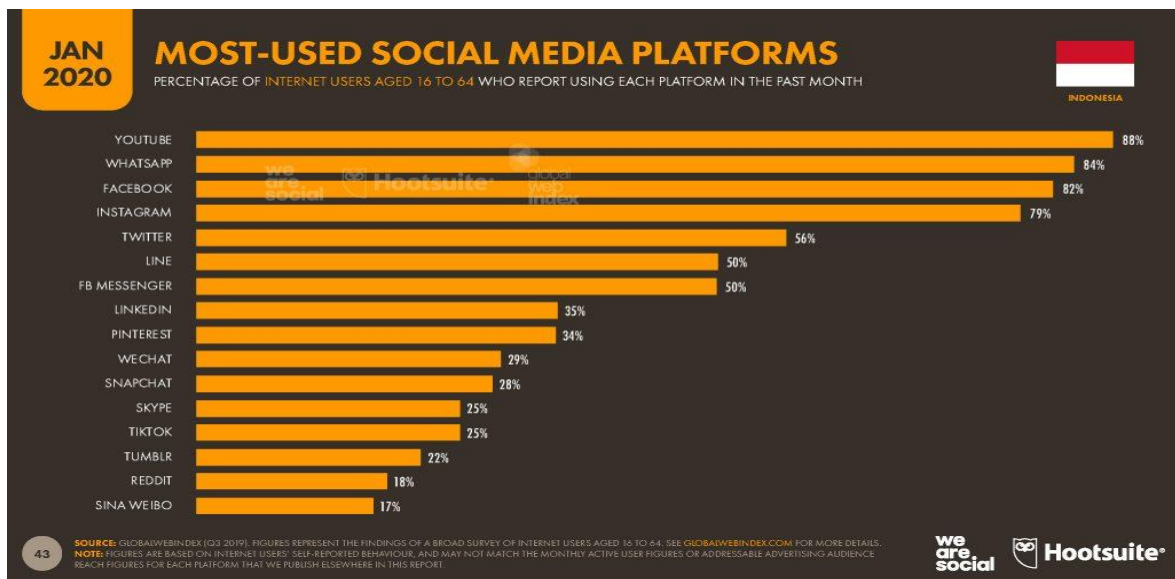
¹ Fahrimal, Y., dkk., *Media Dan Pandemi: Frame Tentang Pandemi Covid-19 Dalam Media Online Di Indonesia (Studi Pada Portal Berita Kompas.com dan Detik.com)*. Jurnal Studi Komunikasi Dan Mediamunikasi Dan Media, 19 (1), 2020, h. 169–186.

² Wiryawan, I. W, *Kebijakan Pemerintah Dalam Penanganan Pandemi Virus Corona Disease 2019 (Covid-19) Di Indonesia*, 2019

³ Guang-yi, X., dkk., *The Impact of Transformational Leadership Style on Organizational Performance: The Intermediary Effects of Leader-Member Exchange*. *International Conference on Management Science & Engineering (15th)*, 2008, 1090–1097.

⁴ Al Khajeh, E. H, *Impact of Leadership Styles on Organizational Performance*. *Journal of Human Resources Management Research*, 2018. <https://doi.org/10.5171/2018.687849>

Picture 1
Social Network Users in Indonesia, 2020



Source : <https://.slideshare.net>

Social media feature forums and comments that enable people to share and exchange information and ideas in virtual communities or network.⁵ Independence of speech and access to information are essential aspects in a democratic country where citizens actively join the public space and become supervisors to shape decision-making. Social media allows users to interact with like-minded people selectively and seek ideologically equivalent opinions (Pariser, 2012). Dissimilarities in ideology or interest caused the controversy regarding government policies handling COVID-19. These different perspectives raise pros and cons.

The ongoing debate among social media users is about the quality of President Joko Widodo's policies in handling the COVID-19 pandemic. The use of social media shows a higher level of citizen involvement with local governments.⁶ In addition, the government and the public have widely used social media to express political issues, giving rise to debate among social media users. These differences in views arise

because each audience of social media users has their interpretation of media texts. The debate raises the pros and cons of government/President policies handling COVID-19. Differences in interpretation of social media texts are a form of audience acceptance of messages differently because each audience has a different social, cultural, and political background.

Based on the description of the background of the research focus, the formulation of the research problem is: How do social media users interpret President Joko Widodo's leadership style on social media users? This study aims to understand and interpret how social media users perceive President Joko Widodo's leadership style. Then, this study can provide data on public or audience opinions on government policies in handling COVID-19, and explain the pros and cons of public interpretations regarding leadership style in government management, including during the National Disaster Response-COVID-19 situation.

⁵ Leavey, J, *Social Media And Public Policy. What Is Evidence? Economic & Social Research Council*, 2013, September.

⁶ Reddick, C. G., dkk, *A social media text analytics framework for double-loop learning for*

citizen-centric public services : A case study of a local government Media sosial use. Government Information Quarterly, 2016 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.giq.2016.11.001>, h. 1–16.

Literature Reviews

Social media has the advantage of allowing users to express their views and criticisms of actual reality. According to Dareen and Shanab (2015), the impact of social media on the government has occurred since 2011, which uses social media channels to open dialogue between the government and its citizens. The popularity of social media and its characteristics allow citizens or any stakeholder to get more information that makes them more familiar with, understand, and monitor government activities.

Social media can be seen as an online medium (facilitator) that strengthens relationships between users as well as a social bond⁷. Social media allows the public to openly and freely express their opinions and perspectives on different government policies and other matters. The term social media used throughout this report refers to social media broadly, going beyond well-known networks such as Twitter to include forums and comment sections on major media sites. It refers to any interaction where people create, share, and exchange information and ideas in virtual communities or networks.⁸

Governments have recognized the Internet's importance and started providing their services electronically through e-government websites. This initiative is to improve the performance of government services provided to various stakeholders (citizens, businesses, and the government itself). As the Internet evolved, governments also evolved in the same direction and witnessed a shift from e-government services to social government; that is, governments provide their services through social media such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Flickr.⁹ Social networking is “a networking platform,

encompassing all connected devices that encourage collaboration in creating, organizing, connecting, and sharing content.¹⁰

Social media or online networks that facilitate interactions around online content production and exchange have become famous for expressing opinions and exposing political issues.¹¹ Social media presents a unique opportunity to expand the SOS theory. Social media platforms enable individuals to establish, cultivate, and sustain relationships with others from various backgrounds, breaking limitations of time and location (Stoycheff, 2016).¹² Social media may raise various themes or concerns among the audience, including one that concerns to leadership style.

Further research reveals that democratic leaders take great care to involve all members of the team in discussion and can work with a small but highly motivated team (Wamy & Swamy, 2014).¹³ Each leader owns a distinct style that shapes their attitude and behavioural patterns. Cultural studies is the empirical examination of media and culture and how they interact with issues of power and politics. The objective is to advocate for social change on behalf of underprivileged communities or social groups resulting from disparities in socioeconomic class, gender, race, and religion. Cultural Studies aims to comprehend the significance of social reality and critique it via examining media studies, visual design, and other socio-cultural phenomena that arise in society as distinct cultural creations generated by individuals and their surroundings.

The focus of Cultural Studies is the aspects of culture and power that can be seen in cultures that emerge along with human development. This study is a form of critical

⁷ Nasrullah, R., Media sosial: Perspektif Komunikasi, Budaya, dan Sositologi, (Bandung: Simbiosis Rekatama Media, 2015).

⁸ Leavey, J., *Social Media And Public Policy. What Is Evidence? Economic & Social Research Council*, 2013 September

⁹ Khasawneh, R. T., dkk., *E-Government and Social Media Sites: The Role and Impact. World Journal of Computer Application and Technology*, 1(1). 2013, <https://doi.org/10.13189/wjcat.2013.010103>

¹⁰ Picazo-vela, S., dkk., *Understanding risks, benefits, and strategic alternatives of social media applications in the public sector.*

Government Information Quarterly, 29(4), 2012, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.giq.2012.07.002>, h. 504–511.

¹¹ Bruns, A., *Towards Prodisage: Futures For User-Led Content Production. Proceedings Cultural Attitudes towards Communication and Technology* 2006, 2006, 275–284.W

¹² Stoycheff, E., *Under Surveillance: Examining Media sosial's Spiral of Silence Effects in the Wake of NSA Internet Monitoring*, *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 2016, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077699016630255>

¹³ Wamy, N. J. waras, dkk., *Leadership styles. Advances In Management*, 7(1). 2014

review of the definition of culture that leads to “*the complex everyday world we all encounter and through which all move*” (Edgar, 1999). Inseparable from all human actions and inventions, culture serves as a means for humans to comprehend and manifest their identities. Williams defines culture as universal, encompassing common interpretations of everyday significances associated with values, material/symbolic items, and norms. Hence, culture may be defined as the collective encounter conveyed via diverse literary works, behavioral customs, and the interpretations of individuals in their daily existence.¹⁴

The encoding-decoding communication model proposed by Stuart Hall states that the meaning of "encoding" by the sender is translated (decoding) by the recipient and that the meaning of encoding can be translated differently. In the book entitled "Encoding and Decoding Television Discourse" or "Formation and Decoding of Codes in Television Discourse" that it is an effort to criticize the problem and bring innovation in this field. The meaning of the message depends on the audience's background and experience.¹⁵ Encoding is the process of creating a message with a particular code, while decoding is the process of using a code to define a message. In the communication process, the audience contributes to defining and interpreting the messages they obtain, which may not always align with the intended meaning of the message.¹⁶

Reception Theory is a theoretical framework that emphasizes the audience's message receiving rather than the sender's role.¹⁷ Reception analysis is a specific approach within audience studies that thoroughly investigates how media speech is absorbed by its audience's

discourse practices and culture. Definitively, reception comes from the word *recipiō(n)* (Latin), which is interpreted as acceptance or welcoming. In general, reception theory is interpreted as the reader's acceptance, welcoming, response, reaction, and attitude toward a literary work.¹⁸ The audience interprets the message from the media text consumed and the process of interpreting the socio-cultural representation that surrounds the audience. Referring to Denis McQuail, the audience interprets the message in the process of receiving the message (reception analysis) from the media consumed. Reception analysis focuses on the use of media texts as a reflection of socio-cultural consequences and as a process of giving meaning to all cultural experiences and productions.¹⁹

Audience research has direct attention and focus on analysis in a social and political context where media content is produced (encoding), as well as the consumption of media content that is interpreted by the audience in the context of everyday life (decoding). As stated by 'Stuart Hall' (encoding or decoding model of the relationship between text and audience), there is a relationship between the audience and media texts. The audience actively consumes media messages and interprets them according to their socio-cultural background. Individuals receive and interpret media texts based on gender, social class, age, and ethnicity. This influences the audience as readers of media texts (Imran, 2012). Media is a space for the audience to understand ongoing communication, including leadership communication carried out by the government. There are four stages in communication theory, "production, circulation, use (which here he calls distribution or consumption), and reproduction".²⁰

¹⁴ Barker, C., *Cultural Studies (terj)*. Kreasi Wacana, 2005.

¹⁵ Hall, S. *Media Power : The Double Bind. Journal of Communication*, 1974, h. 19–26.

¹⁶ Fathurizki, A., dkk., *Pornografi Dalam Film : Analisis Resepsi Film “ Men , Women & Children ” Film Men, Women Film “ Men , Women & Children ”* tidak masuk ke Indonesia . Penonton di Indonesia hanya bisa menikmati film ini dengan menonton secara online di website streaming fil. ProTVF, 2018, 2(44).

¹⁷ Danesti, M, *Encyclopedia of Communication. University of Toronto Press*, 2013.

¹⁸ Ratna, N., *Sastra dan Culture Studies Representasi Fiksi dan Fakta*, Pustaka Pelajar, 2012

¹⁹ Fathurizki, A., dkk., *Pornografi Dalam Film : Analisis Resepsi Film “ Men, Women & Children ” Film Men, Women Film “ Men , Women & Children ”* tidak masuk ke Indonesia, Penonton di Indonesia hanya bisa menikmati film ini dengan menonton secara online di website streaming fil. ProTVF, 2(44), 2018.

²⁰ Fathurizki, A., dkk., *Pornografi Dalam Film : Analisis Resepsi Film “ Men, Women & Children ” Film Men, Women Film “ Men , Women & Children ”* tidak masuk ke Indonesia, Penonton di Indonesia hanya bisa menikmati film ini dengan

Morley, in his book "Cultural Transformation: The Politics of Resistance",²¹ proposed three theoretical stances applicable to the analysis of reception in texts (programs) that are likely to be adopted:

1. *Dominant (or 'hegemonic') reading*: The reader aligns with the program codes (which contain values, attitudes, beliefs, and assumptions) and fully accepts the meaning offered and desired by the program maker.
2. *Negotiated reading*: The reader agrees with the program codes to a certain extent and accepts the meaning offered by the program maker but modifies it to reflect his or her position and interests.
3. *Oppositional ('counter hegemonic') reading*: the reader is not in line with the program codes, rejects the meaning or reading offered, and then determines his or her alternative frame in interpreting the message/program (Meilasari & Wahid, 2020).

The three hypotheses on audience perception of media texts serve as classifications for how audiences perceive, analyze, and understand media texts. Audiences do not accept texts as they are. However, socio-cultural backgrounds influence the process of acceptance and interpretation by audiences, resulting in interpretations that may vary among individuals.

Methodology

This study uses reception analysis, a method for understanding the symbolic implications of the circulation of meaning through special media from audience studies that examine how media discourse is assimilated through audience discourse and cultural practices. The reception analysis model has three elements, namely 1) Dominant (or 'hegemonic') reading: readers are in line with the program codes and fully accept the meaning offered and desired by the program maker. 2) Negotiated reading:

menonton secara online di website streaming fil. ProTVF, 2(44), 2018.

²¹ Adiprabowo, V. D., *Penciptaan Video Seni Melalui Representasi Kekerasan dalam Program Komedi Televisi "Opera van Java."* Jurnal Rekam, 10(2), 103–112, 2024

Readers, to some extent, are in line with the program codes and accept the meaning offered by the program maker but modify it to reflect their positions and interests. Furthermore, 3) Oppositional ('counter hegemonic') reading: readers are not in line with the program codes and reject the meaning or reading offered, and then determine their alternative frames in interpreting messages/programs.²²

The purpose of reception analysis is to investigate the reasons behind diverse audience interpretations, the psychological and social elements contributing to these variations, and the consequent results (Moleong, 2004; Ridwan & Vera, 2019).²³ This phenomenon emerges due to the variations in the demographic characteristics of the research informants. The primary data sources are social media users, particularly lecturers and academics. These individuals are chosen as informants and consist of:

- 1) Varied genders (male and female)
- 2) Diverse age groups
- 3) Various cultural backgrounds, educational levels, income levels, and political ideologies
- 4) The occupations of informants consist of 11 individuals, particularly:
 - a) Informants who tend to be pro and con with the president's or government's leadership in handling the COVID-19 pandemic
 - b) Five (5) male informants and three (3) female informants
 - c) Profession as lecturers and researchers
 - d) Varied political and cultural ideologies

Data were obtained from in-depth interviews and observations. Interviews were conducted with eight lecturers and researchers as the primary informants, supplemented by three experts to enhance the data analysis. All informants actively utilize social media platforms. Users engage on social media by posting content, writing statuses, and responding to the statuses of others. The interview seeks to generate data relevant to the research problem to determine social media users' perceptions of the

²² Em, Griffin, A first look at communication theory. New York: McGraw-Hill Companies, 2012

²³ Moleong, L. J., *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif*. PT. Remaja Rosdakarya, 2016.

government's COVID-19 policies. At the same time, observations were carried out to analyze media texts, mainly social media posts, related to the handling of COVID-19.

Result

President Joko Widodo's policy in handling the COVID-19 pandemic has turned out to have pros and cons. Users of social media accounts also expressed reactions to the policy by writing pro and con statuses. The existing statuses then increasingly gave rise to pros and cons in various comments from members of the account owner's friendships, which caused a debate between the account owner and social media friends. The pros and cons regarding the attitude and policies of the Government of the Republic of Indonesia taken by President Joko Widodo

(Jokowi) to break the chain of transmission of the coronavirus or COVID-19 were considered slow, indecisive, disorienting and changing between statements by the president and ministers. The policies the president and government implemented significantly influenced the strategies to manage COVID-19 in Indonesia. Effective policies are essential to dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. The various Presidential Policies implemented in response to COVID-19 reflect President Jokowi's leadership qualities, which appear to lack the necessary firmness or qualifications to effectively address the pandemic, resulting in ongoing debates among social media users.

The following are various perspectives from sources concerning President Jokowi's policies in managing the COVID-19 pandemic:

Tabel 1 Audience Reception of President Jokowi's Policy in Handling COVID-19

Name	Hegemony	Negotiation	Opposition	Background
Informant 1		Uploading news about President Jokowi's policies regarding COVID-19 on social media is increasingly widespread and can potentially distort the facts.		- male, lecturer with a tendency to support Jokowi and the government
Informant 2			Tb. Massa Djafar: The news status and comments on social media indicate that the President appears sluggish, lacking seriousness, and perplexed. The policies that have been formulated, whether currently in operation or set to be released soon, are considered insufficient and controversial.	lecturer A political observer and party administrator with a critical political ideology regarding the President and government.
Informant 3			Insufficiently assertive, the President's policy is simply normative.	Male, lecturer, researcher, and tends to be critical of the government
Informant 4		Online posts (status and news updates) on this issue attracted great attention and triggered extensive debates among internet users.		Female, Lecturer, Activist, Critical toward Jokowi and the government

Informant 5			Almost all approvals are given if they do not interfere with sharing promotions and political posts that may offend someone.	Female Lecturer: Neutral
Informant 6			Concealed knowledge exists, and policies prioritize commercial interests over public health. The decision-making process is hindered by the myriad interest groups surrounding the president.	Male, Lecturer, Activist, Critical toward Jokowi and the government
Informant 7	In my opinion, the government has made efforts to engage with the broader community in spreading information about managing COVID-19.			Women, Lecturers, and researchers: Pro Jokowi and government
Informant 8	Group 1 consists of individuals consistently supporting the president and maintaining positive opinions regarding the president's policies. Group 2 opposes the president, asserting that any action taken by the president is mistaken. Most of this group consists of individuals who did not support the current president in the most recent presidential election. Group 3 serves as the neutral group. The third group typically participates in constructive criticism of the president's policies.			Male Lecturer and researcher Pro Jokowi and government

The difference in how people respond to messages received by people on public social media has caused controversy over the efficiency of President Jokowi's leadership in handling COVID-19. The numerous debates that have arisen have led to the understanding that the effectiveness of President Jokowi's actions is now inadequate and seems perplexing and disorganized in dealing with the COVID-19 epidemic. However, supporters of the president and the government claim that there is no

justification to disapprove of Jokowi's leadership regarding COVID-19. They assert that universal support for the government is imperative because the current epidemic represents a disaster that affects people worldwide. Moreover, criticism is a force that allows individuals to evaluate reality and problems with precision. The interviews revealed the specific approaches, level of acceptability, and public perception on social media about President Jokowi's leadership in handling COVID-19

Tabel 2 Public reception of Jokowi's policies on Facebook social media

Name	Hegemony	Negotiation	Opposition	Background
Informant 1			There would undoubtedly be disagreements about President Jokowi's level of leadership competence in handling the COVID-19 pandemic. Polemics arise due to the fundamental divergence in political interpretations among the Indonesian population. Currently, the possibility of an argument against President Jokowi's leadership competence in handling COVID-19 is not evident due to the global nature of the pandemic, which does not distinguish between different ethnicities.	- Male, lecturer with a tendency to support Jokowi and the government
Informant 2	The disagreement is not readily apparent; rather, the pro-Prabowo voters have greater influence. Moreover, the visibility of the President's leadership qualities is somewhat limited.			lecturer A political observer and party administrator with a critical political ideology regarding the President and government.
Informant 3	Yes			- Male, lecturer, researcher, and tends to be critical of the government
Informant 4	Yes, the level of criticism and discussion around the president's leadership in managing the COVID-19 pandemic is substantial.			Female, Lecturer, Activist, Critical toward Jokowi and the government

Informant 5	Regarding the leadership, many devoted administration followers may rationally and impartially acknowledge that the president's approach to handling COVID-19 is sluggish and inefficient. A considerable number of advocates have later reversed their stance and voiced criticism towards the president. Furthermore, there is widespread suspicion that Luhut (Coordinating Minister for Maritime Affairs and Investment) significantly influences the president's deliberation. Luhut is quite hospitable towards China. Ignoring Indonesia's financial crisis and debt, Jokowi prioritizes relocating the capital to Kalimantan, leading to a billion-dollar economic burden. Acknowledging Indonesia's declining economy, The public understands Indonesia's financial situation. Therefore, they are willing to fight side by side from the lower to upper classes to help become volunteers and even donors for COVID-19.			Female Lecturer: Neutral
Informant 6			Never. Avoid debate. Respond via status on own account only	Male, Lecturer, Activist, Critical toward Jokowi and the government
Informant 7			Every leadership in a country must have pros and cons, especially in the era of Mr. Jokowi's leadership; since the presidential nomination, there have often been conflicts between the pros and cons in each presidential candidate camp. However, in my opinion, the government should concentrate on the spread of Covid 19. Here, the government must be alert in making responsive policies for handling COVID-19.	Female, Lecturers, and researchers: Pro Jokowi and government
Informant 8	Of course, arguments often emerge between people who support and oppose the president.			Male Lecturer and researcher Pro Jokowi and government

DISCUSSION

Audience Acceptance of Social Media in Handling the COVID-19 Pandemic

The profound effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, experienced by the community across many sectors, have prompted questions about Jokowi's leadership in formulating policies and implementing strategic measures to manage COVID-19 infections. Various views on social media both align with and challenge the viewpoint and policies of the government of the Republic of Indonesia, including those implemented by President Joko Widodo (Jokowi) in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic. The policies of the government/President Jokowi are considered slow, indecisive, disoriented, and changing, and they need to focus on the interests and needs of the community. The Jokowi government tends to underestimate whether Indonesians are immune from attacks by this virus (Briantika, 2020).²⁴

Strong leadership is needed to deal with a problem as big as COVID-19. It will affect the formulation of policies and the implementation of tactical measures that the community needs and deserves to deal with the difficult circumstances brought on by COVID-19. Several policies that have caused pros in society include social media users to obtain various information they need for all their daily needs. The sophistication of electronic media, which continues to innovate and is supported by the internet, allows many social media to be used by the public.²⁵ Social media offers various conveniences, such as broader and faster social interactions, cheaper and more comprehensive publications and socialization, and rapid access to information.²⁶

Five social media users criticized or opposed the leadership and policies of President Jokowi and the government. The government's

policy steps are characterized by a careful and thoughtful approach, which requires extraordinary decisiveness in decision-making. They need extra strength to adapt to the situation on the ground, make accurate judgments, and sometimes contradict each other. Therefore, the government has relinquished authority over the command and coordination process with the local government. The dissemination of President Jokowi's policies, primarily through social media platforms, is often considered slow. Social media has become the leading platform for articulating opinions, aspirations, criticisms, and the advantages and disadvantages of handling the COVID-19 outbreak. According to (Tunshorin, 2016), the audience is free to assess the significance of the messages conveyed by the media.²⁷

The variation in interpretative significance arises from the engaged audience. Stuart Hall defines active imagination in comprehending media texts as a theoretical framework that emphasizes the attention given by individuals to media texts and their subsequent response in the process of mass communication (decoding).²⁸ This process involves receiving and interpreting the media text, which generates a profound response from the audience. It also considers how individuals interpret media content based on their knowledge and experiences. The media serves as a platform for the public to comprehend continuous communication, including the communication activities of government officials.²⁹

Effective management of the COVID-19 pandemic relies heavily on the leadership of the head of state to prevent the spread of the disease. The president's leadership as head of state is characterized by the ability to identify and select the most suitable and optimal actions

²⁴ Briantika, Positif COVID-19 di Indonesia Jadi 514 Kasus, 48 Meninggal. Tirto.Id, 2020.

²⁵ Munzir, A. A., dkk., *Beragam Peran Media sosial dalam Dunia Politik di Indonesia*, JPPUMA: Jurnal of Governance and Political Social UMA, 7(2), 173–182, 2019.

²⁶ Baidu, *Jelajah Dunia Mobile di Indonesia*. Baidu Indonesia, 2014.

²⁷ Littlejohn, S. W., dkk., *Theories of Human Communication*, Salemba Humanika, 2009.

²⁸ Meilasari, S. H., dkk., *Analisis Resepsi Khalayak Terhadap Isi Pesan Pada Iklan Wardah Cosmetics " Long Lasting Lipstic Feel The Color "* Sri Hesti Meilasari, Umaimah Wahid. 1–8, 2018.

²⁹ Fathurizki, dkk., *Pornografi Dalam Film: Analisis Resepsi Film " Men , Women & Children " Film Men , Women Film " Men , Women & Children "* tidak masuk ke Indonesia . Penonton di Indonesia hanya bisa menikmati film ini dengan menonton secara online di website streaming fil. ProTVF, 2(44).

for the community. Ideally, the implemented regulations and measures are expected to minimize the potential hazards for the community. Robust leadership is essential as anxiety caused by the coronavirus endures for an extended period before individuals may resume their usual lives. The UN declaration indicates that the coronavirus in Asia is still ongoing due to the lack of decisive measures to manage the epidemic.³⁰

Other studies have shown that passive news consumers via social media tend to engage in selective ideological consumption or interaction.³¹ Research shows that while social media can encourage exposure to cross-cutting ideas, users tend to share and click on ideologically confirming content (Bakshy et al., 2015).³² Debates are taking place among social media account users regarding the quality of President Joko Widodo's leadership in various policies related to handling the COVID-19 pandemic.

The difference in views arises because each audience of social media users has their interpretation of media texts. The debate raises the pros and cons of government and presidential policies to handle COVID-19. Differences in interpretation of social media texts are a form of audience acceptance of messages differently because each audience has a different social, cultural, and political background. Uploading news about President Jokowi's policies in handling COVID-19 on social media is increasing, rampant, and has the potential for distortion. There could be misunderstandings due to the extensive debate on social media about President Jokowi's response to COVID-19. Five interviewees highly comprehended the COVID-19 matter conveyed on social media. These five individuals expressed dissatisfaction with the government's epidemic management through their written critiques and disavowed the approach. This fact indicates that their understanding of the condition is contradictory. The other three informants perceive the management of COVID-19 on social media as a

beneficial development and do not consider it worthy of criticism since they believe the government has made commendable efforts for the advantage of the community.

Generally, news reports and comments on social media portray the president as sluggish, lacking seriousness, and perplexed; measures that are finalized, already in effect, or about to be implemented become contentious. The policies implemented by the president need more firmness; they are just normative. Status or news about it attracts attention and is widely discussed by netizens. The opposition believes hidden information and policies prioritize economic interests over public health. The government tends to be slow in taking action and taking policies that side with the community. Generally, policies are understood as defending the interests of specific groups or parties.

Meanwhile, three informants interpreted the status of handling COVID-19 positively and very beneficial to the community. All three individuals agreed that the government had made efforts to provide information to the broader people about managing COVID-19. Therefore, there is nothing to criticize because social media is just a medium for distributing information. It is merely one method to reestablish contact between parties who have been disconnected for an extended period.

Undoubtedly, variations will arise among the audience due to their wide range of perspectives and backgrounds. Consequently, disseminating information or news might elicit various reactions and interpretations. There are 3 groups related to posts about the president on social media, whether about COVID-19 or other government policies. Group 1 is a pro-president who always positively supports the president's policies. Group 2 is anti-president; any policy taken by the president is considered wrong. Most of these groups did not vote for the current president in the last presidential election. Group 3 is the neutral group. This third group is usually quite critical of assessing the president's policies.

³⁰ Saminarsih, D. S., Tempo.Com. <https://kolom.tempo.co/read/1328253/menuju-strategi-nasional-penanganan-covid-19/full&view=ok>, 2020.

³¹ FLaxman, dkk., *Filter Bubbles , Echo Chambers , And Online News Consumption*, Public

Opinion Quarterly, 80, 298–320. <https://doi.org/10.1093/poq/nfw006>, 2016.

³² Bakshy, E., dkk., *Exposure to ideologically diverse news and opinion on Media sosial*, (Vol. 348, Issue 6239), 2015.

Basically, the audience has their considerations for evaluating the credibility of the status or information on social media about how successful President Jokowi's leadership was in handling COVID-19. Three individuals construed the state of social media as either trust or hegemony, asserting that the President had outstanding leadership abilities and competence in managing the COVID-19 pandemic that devastated Indonesia. If there is criticism, it is only personal and tends to dislike the government and the President. Statements and statuses can also be trusted if the government provides the information through an official spokesperson. This activity is a communication technology process, especially computers or other devices, to communicate. (Budiargo, 2015), states that the use of technology in CMC facilitates the exchange of semantic content through telecommunications networks, which are processed through one or more computers between individuals and groups.³³

These five respondents saw status as a negotiation process characterized by a propensity to trust and criticize the situation. According to one informant, the information shared on social media may be trusted simultaneously, but it cannot be trusted. The result is contingent upon the rationality, logicity, and objectivity of the content of the social media status. Hence, social media transcends its role as a platform for individuals to disseminate many types of information, photographs, videos, and other content. It is an integral part of political communication. Many digital media formats can shape public sentiment and mobilize political backing proficiently (Munzir et al., 2019).

Political figures have unrestricted access to social media platforms for campaigning or government administration. (Munzir et al., 2019) reported that candidates employ social media platforms, YouTube, and other similar

channels to conduct audio-visual campaigns. The development of social media has been profoundly transformative.³⁴ They are breaking prevailing concepts and ideas controlled by others. A single container known as social networks/social media consolidates the many levels of communication. The consequences must be considered since social media progressively provides avenues for anyone to articulate their views openly. Nevertheless, it is essential to establish self-control to ensure that freedom does not violate limits or cause offense to others.³⁵

Relying on social media accounts to convey news as a means of responding to and criticizing news provided by traditional media that often lack neutrality, balance, and support the same interests and ideologies, or when model owners or entrepreneurs operate the media solely to serve and protect their interests.³⁶ The use of social media may facilitate political engagement. Political engagement in election processes may be facilitated using social media platforms like Twitter. Implicitly, this indicates the level of interest among young internet users in the political landscape of Indonesia. Furthermore, apart from its usage for political campaigns, internet users utilize social media platforms to engage in discussions, debates, and information sharing regarding elections.³⁷

Due to social media's rapid, inexpensive, unlimited, and personal characteristics, the inclination towards minimal or no filtering or modification in content produced and shared leads to a need for more accountability and quality of social media news. Social media has evolved into a platform for public engagement and citizen journalism. If used wisely, it may serve as a valuable information resource for the government in communicating diverse policies about community interests. Digital technology offers a

³³ Budiargo, D., *Berkomunikasi Ala Net Generations*, PT. Elex Media Kompetindo, 2015.

³⁴ Munzir, A. A. R., dkk., *Beragam Peran Media sosial dalam Dunia Politik di Indonesia*, JPPUMA: Jurnal of Governance and Political Social UMA, 7(2), 173–182, 2019.

³⁵ Watie, E. D. S., *Komunikasi dan Media sosial (Communications and Social Media)*, The Messenger, III(1), 69–75, 2011

³⁶ Munzir, A. A. R., dkk., *Beragam Peran Media sosial dalam Dunia Politik di Indonesia*, JPPUMA: Jurnal of Governance and Political Social UMA, 7(2), 173–182, 2019.

³⁷ Siregar, S. F., dkk., *Karakter dan Akhlak Pemimpin dalam Perspektif Islam*, Journal of Education, Humaniora, and Social Sciences (JEHSS), 1(2), 110–116, 2018.

cost-effective and efficient option as a campaign technology.³⁸ Social media and similar social media are digital online media that can be connected to a wide range of users and are "Real Time" and "Up to Date." Most users have high immediate reactions and trust in the statements made in online status updates.

At the negotiation level, informants trust information or news on social media, but not as a source of information that is entirely reliable because social media is not a news media that goes through a production process according to journalistic values like mass media. Social media is more intended for personal matters and minor problems. This condition is ironic when sources of information that do not have considerations of balanced values but are only sourced from subjective values have become the mecca of society. However, conventional media, whose production process goes through various steps with considerations of journalistic ethics, tends to be ignored today, especially by the millennial generation.

At the level of oppositional significance, informants believe that mainstream media does not express critical ideas but instead tends to prioritize reporting news that aligns with the government's interests. Hence, the general populace actively pursues knowledge based on their requirements or convictions, believing that social media platforms may offer a more excellent pool of information. Social media users frequently follow or reference the status of a person they may trust. This situation represents a significant skepticism toward official government information sources and mainstream media information perceived as co-opted.

The differences in interpretation of President Jokowi's policies in handling COVID-19 reflect the differences in the demographics of the informants. Differences in political ideology are the main difference in interpreting Jokowi's policies and are expressed in statuses that give rise to pros and cons. Informants with a political inclination against Jokowi often perceive his policies and those of his ministers as inconsequential and sluggish, giving rise to

societal disorder and controversy. The policies need a clear answer, are perplexing, and must align with the desirable remedies sought by the community. Conversely, informants who support the Jokowi administration believe that Jokowi's policies and the Ministers are suitable, offer adequate solutions, and the community should show support and patience as COVID-19 is a complex issue that cannot be resolved quickly and is being faced by nearly all nations worldwide. These pros and cons led to a debate that resulted in polarization between the two parties.

The difference depends on the background of the informants themselves. Indeed, the audience's interpretation varies among audiences, as the meaning is highly dependent on the interpretation of each audience. According to the Theory of Reception Analysis, hegemony refers to the audience with a religious, national political ideology and a tendency to oppose the president's handling of the pandemic. This audience states that criticism must be carried out to balance the meaning of democracy. Audiences with the interpretation of negotiation regarding the status of policy and government in handling the pandemic have a neutral political ideology but need more seriousness in handling COVID-19. Meanwhile, audiences with oppositional interpretations are pro-Jokowi and the government and always praise them. They are ready to argue with audiences who write critical statuses even though they admit they do not have any political stream or are non-participants.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest

³⁸ Andriandi, F., *Partisipasi Politik Virtual: Demokrasi Netizen di Indonesia*. RM Books, 2017.

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