The Usage of Social Media and Political Branding of Public Official during Covid-19

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Abstract
The study examined the use of social media by public officials during the Covid-19 Pandemic, focusing on the Twitter accounts of the Java Province Governor. The accounts were studied as they were associated with four of Indonesia's governors with a high level of activity. The study employed a qualitative method. Data were collected from the given Twitter accounts, which contained pieces related to policies for the handling of the Covid-19 pandemic using the NCapture software. The results of the analysis showed that the four governors seemed to deliberately use social media and Covid-19 issues for various purposes ranging from the use of social media as an instrument of information and communication transparency, an instrument for internal government coordination to an instrument for political branding for 2021 Presidential Election. Based on the result of the analysis of the data obtained from Twitter accounts belonging to the governors of java Province Governor, Jakarta, a conclusion is drawn on account of the use of social media during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Keywords : *social media, Twitter, covid-19, public officials.*

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INTRODUCTION

Social media have modified the use of communication resources. One of its implications is the fact that communication between the government or organization with its public has become more widely open (Sáez-Martín et al., 2014). This is attributed to the exponential social media development (Belkahla Driss et al., 2019). Related data in 2015 showed that 65% of the adult population in the USA used social media, a figure which is considered to be ten times bigger compared to that of the previous decade. In Australia, in March 2019,15 million people were recorded as active users of *Facebook* while the other 4.7 million subscribed to *Twitter* (Kankanamge et al., 2019).In Indonesia, as indicated by the data from the Association of Indonesia's Internet Providers, in 2015, around 34.9% of the population was an internet user, and even in November 2010 Indonesia was dubbed as a "*Twitter* country" Oleh CNN Tech (Rumata, 2016).

During the crisis situation such as the Covid-19 pandemic, both the government and public officials maintained direct communication with the public (Teichmann et al., 2020), and therefore, social media have become an effective means of communication during the Covid-19 pandemic era (Basch et al., 2020). In principle, social media have been widely beneficial for handling crises and disasters (Kankanamge et al., 2019) owing to the fact that the Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in a restriction of direct face-to-face meetings and left people with no other choice than the use of communication model or information search by means of database hunting and digital transaction (Androutsopoulou et al., 2019).In view of governmental communication, social media are also considered to be capable of displaying real-time policy-related content (Witanto et al., 2018). Therefore, communication between the government and the public through social media may bring another perspective to the given policies, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic (Cinelli et al., 2020).

In Indonesia, almost all of the national and regional offices have made use of social media as a communication platform, especially those that have labeled themselves as a 'smart city, such as Bandung, Surabaya, Yogyakarta, Bogor, and other cities in Central Java, West Java, East Java, and Jakarta provinces (Hasibuan & Sulaiman, 2019). This research aims to identify how regional public officials used

social media, particularly Twitter, during the Covid-19 pandemic. The research focused on the Twitter accounts of the four regional public officials, namely Jakarta Province Governor AniesBaswedan (@aniesbaswedan), Central Java Province Governor GanjarPranowo (@ganjarpranowo), East Java Province Governor Khofifah IndarParawansa (@KhofifahIP), and West Java Province Governor RidwanKamil (@ridwankamil) respectively. The selection of focus was based on the highest number of internet users in Indonesia (Association of Indonesia's Internet Providers, 2020), as well as the fact that the said governors are considered to have the highest level of use of Twitter compared to other governors in Indonesia. In addition, the four provinces are included as Indonesia's regional governments that apply 'smart government.'

Twitter is the social media most frequently used by the four governors to communicate with their public owing to its characteristics as a micro-blogging platform that allows users to interact directly with other users, use the tagar, and is equipped with features like "trending topics." The study aims to identify the issues attributed to the use of social media during the handling of the Covid-19 pandemic within the governmental communication context. In other words, the research focused on issues of dissemination of ideas, programs, and initiatives for the handling of the Covid-19 pandemic by the four governors to the public.

Studies related to the use of social media in the government context have been done with various focuses. The study by Moreno-Ibarra & Torres-Ruiz (2019), Criado et al (2013), Gintova (2019), Gunawong (2014), and Witanto et al., (2018), for instance, highlighted the use of media by governmental bodies to improve public participation and involvement (both in political and public policy participation). A study by Magro (2013), Belkahla Driss et al (2019), and Sobaci (2015) focused on the use of social media as part of public policy infrastructure as well as a tool for governmental bodies to make decisions.

Some tendencies in terms of the government's communication effort and use of social media have been found in the studies above. Firstly, in some of the studies, the subjects were not focused on the government specifying on the head of the regional government; and secondly, research focusing on the communications of the head of the regional government regional, especially those with a focus on social media have not been widely done. The research gap lies between this study with the previous studies. Generally speaking, the trend of social media research focuses on related media effectiveness, with a limited number of research focusing on the model of communication. The focus on the use of social media in the government practice

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context has not been adequately addressed in the previous research. In fact, theoretically, the use of social media in the context of governmental communication will give benefits to both the heads of regional governments and governmental practices. As stated by Picazo-vela et.al (2012), the government's participation in social media may result in better public communication, participation and transparency, and best transfer practices within government institutions.

The covid-19 pandemic situation has required that the public and the nation's health system, including the regional governments, effectively interact with the public, among others, by producing related content on social media (The World Health Organisation, 2020). Such information is a big help to the head of regional governments as it allows them to identify the public's needs, problems, opinions, and feelings for further making effective public policies (Charalabidis et.al, 2015). Such information can come in content featuring suggestions for health protocol, policies for pandemic mitigation, and the strategy for economic recovery. In other words, the heads of regional government must be able to communicate with the public by involving more than one actor and maintaining two-way and more deliberative communication attempts (Nabatchi, 2012). At this point, social media like Twitter can be benefitted from this.

METHODS

The research employed a qualitative approach, while data were collected from the four governors' Twitter accounts, namely governors of Jakarta, West Java, Central Java, and East Java provinces, as presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1.
Twitter Accounts under Study

Governor's Name	Provinces	Twitter Account
RidwanKamil	JawaWest	@ridwankamil

AniesBaswedan	DKI Jakarta	@aniesbaswedan
GanjarPranowo	JawaCentral	@ganjarpranowo
Khofifah IndarParawansa	JawaEast	@KhofifahIP

Source: Twitter, processed.

The research used NVivo 12 Plus *Qualitative Data Software Analysis* (QDSA), which functions as a tool for analysis.NVivohas developed not only as a tool for storing and retrieving information but also has served as a research method reference (Brandão, 2015). The advantage of the qualitative approach lies in its ability to obtain a description of how and why people are involved in social media and the meaning attached to their experience with social media (Snelson, 2016). The following is the data obtained from the governors' uploads on Twitter.

Table 2 Number of Contents by Type

Name Of Governor	Tweet	Retweet
Ridwan Kamil	2,903	353
AniesBaswedan	2,024	970
GanjarPranowo	2,268	1,386
Khofifah IndarParawansa	1,930	544

Source: Twitter, processed.

Data were analyzed using NVivo 12 Plus Qualitative Data Software AnalysisAnalisisemploying some features such as Crosstab Query, Word Cloud, and Word Frequency Query. Prior to the analysis process, data from each of the Governor's Twitter were collected using NCapturesofeware. The data were then inputted into NVivo 12 Plus for manual coding. Data in the coding consisted of the governors' tweets from the first time of the Covid-19 outbreak in Indonesia in March 2020 to the end of November 2020. Data in Table 2 shows the number of tweets recorded with the Nvivo 12 Plus. The data were later used as the main source of information to be used by the researcher to identify how the governors had been using Twitter during the Covid-19 pandemic.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data or findings in this research will be described and analyzed in three parts, namely (1) The Governors' Dominant Topics on Social Media; (2) Dominant Issues Raised by the Governors; and (3) Political Branding Towards the 20214 Presidential Election. Each of the parts will be equipped with data illustration compiled using NVivo 12 Plus*Qualitative Data Software Analysis* (QDSA), yaituNVivo 12 Plus.

The Four Governors' Dominant Topics on di Twitter

What was the governors' major theme on Twitter? The data in this part will be presented using the word cloud feature in which big themes are visualized in word clusters. The collected words have gone through a sorting process for the fact that NVivo 12 Plus is unable to process Indonesian language words in a satisfactory manner. Connectors like "and," "with," "for," and other words were omitted. The data are presented in the following figures.

Figure 1.

Word Cloud Account for the Greater Jakarta Governor

Figure 2 Word Cloud Account for West Java Governor

Figure 3 Word Cloud Account for East Java Governor

Figure 4 Word Cloud Account

The first account belongs to the Governor Greater Jakarta Province Governor with the user name @aniesbaswedan. Figure 1 shows the word "Covid" as the most frequently used word by the Governor of the Jakarta Province. Apart from that, tagar#jakartatanggapcorona (Jakarta corona responsive) is the most dominantly visualized word. Other dominants words include "#jaki," "#psbbjakarta" (Jakarta bigscale social restriction), "sosial" (social), "Juni" (June), "wilayah" (area), and some other words. Some visualized words such as "transportation." (transportation), "trans Jakarta" and "stasiun" (railway station)suggest that mass transport has been the dominant issue frequently used in the Jakarta Province Governor's Twitter. With regards to this issue, some information on public transformation was given as tweets, namely, (1) the change of schedule of public transport due to the pandemic; (2) the condition of the public transport corridors and terminals; (3), transportation health standards and services; (4) provision of supplies for the prevention of Covid-19 spread such as disinfectant, hand sanitizer, and related healthcare instructions; and (5) service information. In addition, the Governor of the Jakarta Province also introduced the use of bicycles as a safe alternative transport during the pandemic.

The next account belongs to West Java Governor with user @ridwankamil (see Figure 2). Words related to Covid dominate RidwanKamil's Twitter account, such as "covid," "psbb" (large-scale social restriction), "masker" (mask), "kesehatan" (health), "pasien" (patient), "pcr," "kasus" (case), "zona" (zone) and tagar

#kitapastimenang (we will win). It is interesting to note that this account has a lot of words related to territories, such as "Indonesia," "Bekasi, "and "Bogor."

The word "Bekasi" and "Bogor" are used to inform policies implemented by the two regencies. Some other words indicate information on the confirmation of Covid-19 spread clusters in each of the said regencies. In terms of governmental practices, West Java Governor once applied the local PSBB (large-scale social restrictionLSSR) to Bogor, Depok, and Bekasi regencies. This resulted in the fact that information with regard to the regencies has been immensely included in the West.

Java Governor's Twitter. Meanwhile, the word "Indonesia" was frequently used by the Governor of West Java in reference to the effort to maintain people's unity in facing the Covid-19 pandemic. Using such a narrative, West Java Governor positions himself as both a regional and national politician.

East Java Governor Twitter's user name is @KhofifahIP (see Figure 3). Like the Jakarta and West Java Governors' Twitter, the topics of discussion focused on the handling of the Covid-19 pandemic. However, some other words, such as

"muslimat" (Muslim women), "jatim" (East Java), "surabaya", "kabupaten" (regency), "desa" (village) and user name of President of Republicof Indonesia "@jokowi". Topics related to Covid-19 were represented by the words "covid", "pasien" (patient),

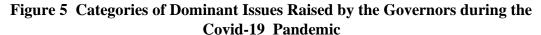"kesehatan" (health), "medis" (medical), "sehat" (healthy),

"bantuan" (help) and "darurat" (emergency). Such tweets with Covid-19 related words generally contained issues on the socialization of health protocol. In addition, the word "covid" also referred to reports on updates of Covid-19 patient handling in East Java.   Finally, the Central Java Governor's Twitter account under the username of @ganjarpranowo (see Figure 4). Like the other three Governors' accounts, an account of @ganjarpranowoalso focused on Covid-19 topics. The word"covid", "masker"
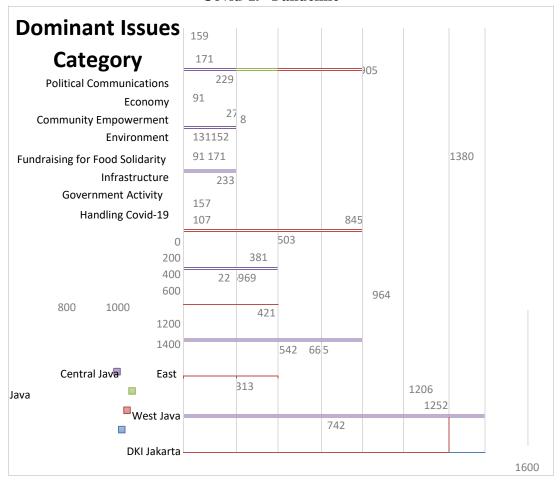
(mask), "protokol" (protocol), "kesehatan" (health), and"bantuan" (help) indicated that GanjarPranowoused his Twitter account for socializing health protocol. Figure 4 indicates mentions of @provjateng(belonging to the Central Java Province government), @dpubmckjateng(belonging to Central Provincial Services for Public Works, Road Construction and Housing), and account of @tajyasinmz(belonging to Vice Governor of Central Java Taj Yasin), suggesting that Twitter was also benefitted

as a communication medium among the local governmental stakeholders. Such communication can be seen in the frequent reports uploaded by the public through their social media, which mainly contained reports and complaints on damages to provincial road lanes. The words "ruas" (road lane) and tagar #jalancantik (wellmaintained road), as can be seen in figure 4, refer to such reports. This well reflects the power of social media like Twitter which has the ability to initiate collective actions and actual information exchange and integrate individual contribution that is flexible and non-hierarchial in nature and not limited by space and time (Linders, 2012). Such Twitter characteristics have been benefitted in a maximum way by Central Java Governor to help him run his governmental practices.

Dominant Issues Raised by the Four Governors

Next, the researcher categorized the dominating issues raised by the four governors through Twitter during the Covid-19 pandemic. The category was based on the most frequently used words searched using Word Frequency Query Nvivo. The words were then grouped into some categories, namely handling of Covid-19, government activities infrastructure, and other issues as fully described in Figure 5 as follows.

Figure 5 Categories of Dominant Issues Raised by the Governors during the Covid-19 Pandemic

As can be seen in Figure 5, the four governors' Twitter accounts have focused on issues of handling of Covid-19 pandemic. The Twitter accounts of Jakarta, West Java, and Central Java provinces governors contain more than 1,000 "Covid-19" words each. East Java governor's Twitter account only has 742 words related to Covid-19 handling issues, yet the word is dominant when compared to other words. In terms of Covid-19 handling issues, the Governor of Jakarta provided more of such issues compared to the remaining three governors.

In view of the government activity issues, governors of East Java, West Java, and Central Java tweeted more than 500 words, with the Central Java governor having 964 words. Jakarta governor's account only had 313 words related to government activity issues.

The next issue is the infrastructure. Jakarta governor's account dominates this issue with 421 related words, while East Java and West Java have 261 words each, and the Central Java governor's account contains 381 words in this category. East

Java and West Java governors' accounts focused more on general infrastructure issues, while Jakarta and Java governors' accounts highlighted relations of transportation infrastructure issues with the pandemic issues, and the CentralJava governor put attention on repairs of road infrastructure using the tagar#jalancantik (well-maintained road).

The next dominant issue is fundraising for food solidarity. The implemented LSSR policy has prevented those whose earnings depend upon physical activities from performing their routines. Therefore, various movements for food solidarity have emerged and formed a mutual support strategy for survival during the crisis. It is interesting to note that while such an issue is dominant with the Twitter accounts of West Java, Central Java, and Jakarta governors, it gets less attention in the East Java governor's account. In West Java's account, food solidarity is one of dominating issues. Food solidarity is also a dominating issue after that of

Covid-19 handling. EastJava governor's account also put food solidarity as a dominating issue with a related word number not bigger than that of the fellow West.

Java, Central Java, and Jakarta governors'.

Meanwhile, the number of words for an environmental issue is not that big. This issue is not dominant in West Java Governor's account. The account focused more on economic issues (905 words), much bigger than that of the other three governors (229 words in the East Java Governor's account, 91 words in the Jakarta Governor's account, and 171 words in the Central Java Governor's account).

The next issue is community empowerment. For this issue, the highest number of related words were found in CentralJava Governor's account (278words), followed by East Java Governor's account (135 words), WestJava Governor's account (112 words), and Jakarta Governor's account (91 words).

Data in Figure 5 shows different policy priorities or programs among the four governors in terms of handling of Covid-19 pandemic. In addition, the figures also reflect each of the governors' communication styles. Contents presented by the governors will also affect public attention, which will result in public participation and behavior patterns (Mergel, 2013). They also indicate that social media have become a good communication medium to be used by the governors as part of the government's internal communication medium (Mergel, 2013), yet a communication strategy is required to make sure that each content can be of a benefit to the public (Rahmawati & Pratiwi, 2020).

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As can be seen from the Governor's Twitter accounts, each tweet demonstrates a variety of content, featuring not only short sentences or messages (adjusted to 280 characters per tweet as allowed by Twitter); they include images, graphics, or videos in tweets or retweets. Within the conceptual framework, social media content information, concept, and theme form crucial communication for the delivery of expected results (Lai & To, 2016). Apart from that, varied posts that come in the forms of texts, images, and videos can attract public response (Furqon et al., 2018). This is reflected in the West Java governor's contents which are often presented in videos with infographic messages. Such style is not found in the other three governors' Twitter. The three other governors normally retweet infographic content from the local Covid-10 Handling Acceleration Task Force. What has been done by the West Java governors is considered to be an innovative effort to attract more public responses.

The research data also reflects that social media have enabled real-time interaction potentials between the government and the public and encouraged economic solutions to the underlying social problems (Clarke, 2017; Syarifuddin et al., 2020). Data from Figure 3and 4conclude that social media have become the need of the head of the regional government, especially amidst the current era of technology (Prabowo, 2018). Social media, with their advantages such as the ability to encourage collective action; generate actual information exchange; integrate individual contribution; remain flexible, non-hierarchical, and not restricted by time and space; can be maximized as an important tool in running the government administration (Linders, 2012). The dominant topics and issues under discussion suggest how the governors have maintained a certain level of consistency in terms of the use of social media (in this case, Twitter) in response to a variety of momentums. Not only did the governors use social media for momentums related to governmental policies or activities, but also as political communication media or political branding benefitting from the Covid-19 pandemic situation. (This topic will be discussed in detail in the next part).

The power of social media has also provided the heads of the regional government to stay updated with related information and public aspiration not available with conventional communication media. Their successful use of social media suggests that they have developed their quality of communication and public

services. Generally speaking, the research data show how the governors have benefitted from social media as communication media in terms of protocol, public policies, and actualization of each vision and mission in their efforts to controllongCovid-19 the pandemic.

The research data also indicate that Twitter has been utilized as a medium for internal coordination among governmental bodies. Reports from the public will be forwarded (retweeted) to accounts belonging to the right local government bodies). The Governor of CentralJava even used Twitter as a medium of coordination between himself and the vice governor. This can be considered as a way to provision swifter and more convenient public services. The social media communication process has become an alternative to the conventional one-way communication that is believed to have failed to obtain public participation. Research by Salahudin et al. (2020), for instance, suggests how the government officials in Indonesia, ranging from President Joko Widodo, officials authorized with the handling of the Covid-19 pandemic, and heads of regional governments have established related interactions and collaboration through Twitter for the handling of Covid-19 pandemic.

It is necessary to note that there have been some institutional and organizational problems that need to be addressed by the heads of the regional government to ensure maximum use of social media within government activities. The problems include a highly dominating bureaucratic atmosphere, low government officials' competence in utilizing the available social media and technology, and public access and digital literacy (Karakiza, 2015).

"Political Branding" Towards 2024 Presidential Election

The research data indicate that Covid-19 content included in the four governors' Twitter accounts indirectly serves as political branding. In other words, the governors have made use of their Twitter accounts as communication tools for establishing political brands benefitting from the Covid-19 related content. The findings relate to their position in the national political competition landscape, where the four governors are prominent candidates for the 2024 presidential election. Despite the fact that the presidential election still has a long way to go, it seems that the political competition atmosphere is around, especially in fact, the current President, Joko Widodo is not eligible for re-running. The four governors' names are readily known to the public through some candidacy surveys as promising candidates for the 2024 presidential election. The widely open political space for the 2024 election hypothetically

contributes to the potential candidate's (including the four governors under research) necessary preparations, one of which is to be done by establishing their own political branding by means of their media social media account and by benefitting from a variety of related momentums.

This can be detected from the word clusters found in the research. In the East Java Governor's Twitter @KhofifahIP, the word "@jokowi", which is the Twitter account of President Joko Widodo(Figure 3), is frequent. Such words can be read as the effort of the East Java Governor's political branding to tell the public that she is a close ally (politically and ideologically) of President Joko Widodo. Within the national political ground, Khofifah is known to be Joko Widodo's staunch supporter in the 2019 election and was even appointed as Minister of Social Affairs in Joko Widodo's cabinet prior to running for and taking office as EastJava Governor in 2020. Apart from that, the word "muslimat" (Muslim women) is also frequent in the account @KhofifahIP. It is not actually a word related to the handling of the Covid-19 pandemic. This is considered to be the Governor's effort to confirm her political branding as a female politician who is a religious nationalist. The word "muslimat" originates from 'PengurusPusat (PP) Muslimat' is a wing of NahdlatulUlama, an Indonesian moderate Islam mass organization that has the largest number of members in the world. Khofifah has been the chair of MuslimatNahdlatulUlamasince since 2000 up to the present time. The members of this organization are women associated with

NahdlatulUlama. The frequent use of the words "@jokowi" and "muslimat" in her Twitter account can be understood as Khofifah's effort to maintain and affirm her political branding as a religious-nationalist politician who is connected with PresidentJoko Widodo, as her political capital for the 2024 Presidential Election.

The same thing can also be seen from the word cloud data of @ridwankamil. (West Java governor's account). One of the words frequently used on his Twitter is "jabarjuara" (West Java the champion), a word which is not actually related to the handling of Covid-19pandemic (see Figure 2). The world cluster originated from the Governor's vision, namely 'the making of West Java that is physically and spiritually a champion with innovation and collaboration." The vision has been aired since his campaign earlier when running as a candidate for West Java Governor. The vision was then translated into some missions and excellent programs realization, which

have been regularly informed through his Twitter. Owing to his background as a professional (architect), West Java Governor has seemed to affirm his political branding as a politician and head of regional government who is competent, ideal, and capable of utilizing information technology.

Central Java and Jakarta Governors' Twitter accounts also indicated similar facts, respectively. In the account of @ganjarpranowo (Figure 4), #jatenggayeng (joyful Central Java) is found, which is the slogan or tagline of the Central Java Province that was officially introduced in 2015 by the Governor to promote and introduce the province's products and potentials. The slogan depicts spirit, boldness, toughness, honesty, friendliness, joy, harmony, and warmth. The presence of the tagar in the world cloud data indicates that the Central JavaGovernor has shared various information on the achievements and implementation of the #jatenggayeng programs. The Governor seemed to continuously build his political branding as a friendly and communicative politician benefitting from his willingness to respond to his followers' mentions. He even takes it easy when he responds to mentions with negative tones.

Jakarta Governor's account @aniesbaswedan has frequently aired the phrase "kolaborasibantuansosial." (social assistance collaboration) (Figure 1). The phrase originated from the program called Large Scale Social Collaboration (LSSC), launched by the Governor in May 2020. The name and abbreviation of the program title were deliberately made similar to the national government program originally intended to restrict social mobility for the prevention of Covid-19 spread. LSSC, as put forward by Jakarta Governor, is a social, collaborative program made available for collaboratively helping others by connecting people who wish to give and those who need help or those who are economically impacted by the implementation of the national PSBB (Large Scale Social Restriction-LSSR) that also applied to Jakarta province. There were four selections of packages in the LSSC program, namely breakfast-dinner meal package, staple food package, holiday festival package, and cash. The media and political observers consider LSSC as a "rivaling program" of LSSR, for the fact that AniesBaswedanis an ambitious politician vying for the presidency. The presence of the word cluster "social assistance collaboration," which refers to the LSSC program, can be seen as part of the Governor's political branding as a head of regional government with the work of a national leader, which triggered insinuation such as "a governor with a presidential work" attached to AniesBaswedan. However, theoretically and conceptually, political branding amidst the

The covid-19 pandemic is normal. In principle, the government's communication practice benefitting from any medium is intended to build the self-image of government officials (Besman et al., 2018). A research by Porimbecsu(in Rahmawati & Pratiwi,

2020)stated that the government's use of the social would result in public opinion building on the government of head of government's performance. Being one of the social media utilized for building political branding, Twitter has considerable effects on public opinion or perception through tweets (Rahmat & Purnomo, 2020).

Bungie (2018) also stated that the current social construction of modern society is heavily influenced by information and communication technology. However, social media can serve as a double-edged knife, as it may become a tool of control over the government administration on the one hand and the killer of the government administration in another hand. Therefore, what the four governors have done (as detected from the word cloud of their Twitter account) can be perceived as a process of social construction that they used to shape their respective political branding and individual identity images. The word "muslimat" in the account @KhofifahIPfor instance, strongly highlights women's image as it refers to the woman's organization which is the wing of NahdlatulUlama. East Java province is the home to the biggest NahdlatulUlama members, and therefore, the image "mother" emerged from the Governor of East Java that further developed as "mother of East Java people."

Political branding actively contributes to the shaping of framing for politicians and political parties since political branding gives politicians a chance to communicate their individual image and political party (Widianti et al., 2019). Within the Indonesian political context, a similar effort was undertaken by Ma'ruf Amin during the 2019 presidential election, during which he made use of Twitter as a political branding tool which turned out to have a significant effect. Researcher Adinugroho et al. (2019) showed that the use of social media highly contributes to electability compared to other internet platforms. This indicates that social media positively affect the public for search for political information and the forms of political inclination toward certain politicians and political parties. Another research also shows a significant relationship between the use of social media for a political campaign and voters' trust or loyalty (Dabula, 2017).

The research data suggest that currently, political branding is not only shaped by a politician's personality and appearance or political party but also by the politician's ability to build relations with voters, leadership genuineness, responsiveness to technology (by means of Twitter), and political messages that raise hopes (Sandra, 2013). The four governors who are the subjects of this research (with their Twitter accounts) describe how political branding can be constructed by means of social media by benefitting from various momentums, including the Covid-19 pandemic.

CONCLUSION

Based on the result of the analysis of the data obtained from Twitter accounts belonging to the governors of West Java, Jakarta, Central Java, and East Java, a conclusion is drawn on account of the use of social media during the Covid-19 pandemic. Firstly, the four governors have immensely utilized social media as part of their effort to handle the Covid-19 pandemic, especially as an instrument or medium of conveying information and conducting direct communication with the public for the handling of the Covid-19 pandemic purposes. Social media have been seen as an important instrument within the framework of government communication in dealing with the pandemic. Secondly, the governors have used Twitter as an instrument for establishing internal coordination for dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic. The internal coordination, which is normally performed in closed spaces, is now done openly (visible to the followers) by utilizing the features available with the social media (in this case, Twitter), such as retweets, tagar, and so forth. In other words, social media, in this case, has made government communication more open, which, to some extent, may bring an advantage to the said governors as they will be considered transparent and accountable leaders. Thirdly, the governors have used Twitter and Covid-19 issues to build and affirm their political branding, particularly as a strategy in anticipation of the 2021 presidential election. The four governors mentioned in this research are potential candidates for the presidential election. In view of the theoretical context, the research is expected to enrich the realm of Covid-19 pandemic studies within the perspective of government communication and the use of social media. The research data and analysis can be benefitted from in terms of practical ground (references for government communication actors for the development of transparent

communication style) and academicians (as references for developing studies on the Covid-19 pandemic in the perspective of government practice or communication).

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