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Political Campaigns and Actor Populism Strategies: A Deontological Ethical Approach

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Abstract

This study wants to see and explore how actors' political campaigns are carried out through populism strategies using an ethical communication approach. The use of populism strategies in Indonesia is increasing due to the strengthening of polarization in the political market mediated by political actors. The populism strategy carried out by actors in general uses disinformation narratives in the form of hoaxes and hate speech by using new media. The characteristics of new media that provide interaction patterns that can be accessed at any time have an impact on the division or polarization of voters in the political market. By using the literature study method, this research shows that the use of populism political strategies is carried out by political actors because voters still consume campaign content according to political choices based on previous election experiences. From the context of deontological moral ethics, the populism strategy of political actors using hoaxes and hate speech shows a violation of deontological moral ethics because it ignores the real moral goal of creating common good and happiness in the context of the state. The use of populist narratives not only destroys democracy but also threatens to erode the good values that have been internalized in a long history of coexistence in a multicultural society like Indonesia.

Keywords: political campaigns; populism; communication ethics; deontology

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Introduction

This study wants to see and explore the ethical positions and strategies of populism actors in political campaigns. In political contestations such as elections, campaigns are the core of political communication involving political actors and voters. In the context of elections in Indonesia, the trend of using populism strategies is currently increasing sharply due to the strengthening of polarization in society which is moderated by political actors (Mietzner & Muhtadi, 2018). The populism strategy is carried out because in the political market, voters often have diverse characteristics and with different voting behavior (Dowding, 2018; Justine Fisher et al., 2018). This diversity of characteristics encourages political actors to produce populist campaign narratives based on voter segmentation in the political voters market and is facilitated by the presence of digital media.

The actor's political campaigns were initially persuasive in nature aimed at shaping voters' political choices and getting votes from voters (Krafft & Donovan, 2020). Political actors use an approach strategy through humanist efforts that prioritize goodness to voters. However, the development of digital media that facilitates access and global political trends has entered the post-truth stage, which is marked by the presence of information disruption that appears in the form of fake news, hoaxes, and hate speech (Rubaidi, 2020). This information disruption is adopted by political actors in their campaign content which contributes greatly to populism and ideological polarization (Au, Ho, & Chiu, 2021). In addition, the involvement of influential public figures such as religious leaders and community leaders in supporting one candidate in the election has an impact on the development of populism in the political market (Jensen, 2017). The involvement of these public figures is not only in supporting populist campaigns, but also in producing and distributing content for political campaigns by actors. The populism strategy is an easy way for actors to influence the thoughts and perceptions of voters by spreading various issues that can shape political choices.

The phenomenon of populism in Indonesia began with the 2014 presidential election contestation which continued in the 2019 presidential election between Jokowi and Prabowo (Budiman, Putriga, Safitri, & Imanuela, 2022). Populism in the presidential election contestation was marked by the use of hoax narratives and hate speech as a political strategy that attacked the two candidates (Sirait, 2019). This populism was driven by the strengthening of Islamic populism by the two candidates (Shaira, Nurida, & Hidayat, 2021; Sihidi, Roziqin, & Suhermanto, 2020). This struggle seeks to seize meaning in its legitimacy to represent Muslims as the majority voter (Jiyanto, 2019). Political campaigns carried out with this populism strategy produce campaign content in the form of hoaxes and

hate speech that have an impact on community division. This division occurs because the narrative produced contains content that does not pay attention to the ethics of political communication that has a larger purpose in the context of living together as a nation (Bowen & Zhu, 2019; Hafez, 2002).

This study aims to see how the ethical position of populism political campaigns by using the perspective of communication ethics. This research is important because so far the research that has been conducted has examined populism from the perspective of communication structures (Jensen, 2017), computer mediation (Au et al., 2021), discourse (Jiyanto, 2019), and the politics of Islamic populism (Sihidi et al., 2020). Meanwhile, research that examines the ethical perspective of political communication is still very rarely done, especially in Indonesia. This study will answer 2 (two) questions, namely: how the populism strategy is carried out in the actor's political campaign and what is the ethical position of the political campaign using the populism strategy. This research has novelty in the context of using concepts and theories in the perspective of political communication ethics that can complement the landscape of understanding how political campaigns should be carried out for the common good.

Literature Review
Political Campaigns and New Media

Political campaigns serve to facilitate political actors to convey ideas, change and mobilize supporters, convey information related to policies and the direction of their political support to supporters (Damore, 2016). The formation of political campaign media is generally divided into the newspaper era, television era and the digital era (Farrell & Webb, 1998). Norris (2014) identifies it as a pre-modern, modern and post-modern era. Referring to the concept of democracy in the United States, the first era ended around 1950 which still relied on print media, partisans, radio broadcasts, and tours of political leaders oration in an area. The second era started from the 1950-1980s, television became the main weapon in campaigning, it was centralized with greater duration and cost. The third era from the late 1980s-1990s, permanent campaigns characterized by a narrowing of messages in the media of newspapers and television which were decentralized with a greater role, played by consultants, survey agencies and marketing specialties. The fourth era, the 2000s, saw a transition of technological innovation in big data and social media. In the post-truth era, the line between factual information and opinion is increasingly blurred. The fourth era was also marked by the widespread use of information manipulation techniques in campaigns.

Although political campaigns have so far been carried out in conventional media such as newspapers, radio, and television, their use is considered increasingly ineffective to reach voters

(Jensen, 2017). Political campaigns are currently dominantly mediated by new media (Filimonov, Russmann, & Svensson, 2016; Russmann & Svensson, 2016; Vaccari, 2008). One of the clearer differences regarding conventional media and new media or digital media is that the communication capacity of users is equal and can be accessed at any time (Althaus & Tewksbury, 2000; Sundar & Limperos, 2013). The presence of this new media allows greater and massive campaign participation in the online campaign production and distribution process (Constantinides, 2014). This online campaign practice creates a new structure in mobilizing and facilitating as well as restrictions on campaign topics or content. This mechanism has empowered voters and the media politically and is able to help political actors reach voters based on the demographics that Petre (2015) targets.

However, there is a negative impact of growing campaigns on social media that it provides quick and wide visibility to disinformation and makes it difficult to correct because personalized campaign content can live in an echo chamber that can avoid unwelcome facts. Another thing that is not expected in the social media revolution for political campaigns is the line between fact and opinion becomes increasingly blurred (Castells, 2009) so that it can increase populism.

Political Communication Ethics and Campaign Content

Ethics is not only concerned with what actions are right or allowed and wrong or not, but also what actions are obligatory or noble (Ferry, 2013). Ethics, in a philosophical sense, also seeks to provide an understanding of the intentions, motives, and character of moral agents, who are also called decision makers or communicators (Narvaez & Lapsley, 2005). Studying ethics is useful for determining what values to uphold, what principles to apply, and for developing a rationally consistent framework that can aid reasoning through ethical issues. One form of ethics that is often used in social problems is normative ethics.

Normative ethics examines how moral theory can be best applied to create the most ethical solutions to problems (Bowen & Zhu, 2019). Ethics, in a normative sense, has been defined by the eminent philosopher Immanuel Kant (1974) and is focused on how humans perform actions or behavior for happiness (Bowen & Zhu, 2019). For example, ethics has to do with how we should live our lives. It focuses on questions about what is right or wrong, fair or unfair, caring or not caring, good or bad, responsible or irresponsible, and the like (Kiviat, 2019)

In contestation, ethics is very useful to maintain the morals and morality of actors, because it is related to good-bad or right-wrong considerations. The choice of ethical action or behavior is based on a variety of reasons. A person's motivation to act ethically varies and a person's ethical actions can be seen from his moral development (Kohlberg, 1981). The moral

development of political actors will be related to how their behavior in communicating is included in the political field. Incorporating ethical elements in political communication will be useful in guiding political activities to run according to the common good which is the main goal of ethics. Political communication is a communication message that has a direct relationship or relationship with the dynamics of the socio-political system.

The concept of political communication has the main elements, namely communicators, message recipients, mass media, and goals. Initially, the purpose of political communication was persuasion, which was carried out in the context of informing, educating, socializing, and entertaining. In its development, Maicas (1995) explains that political communication messages always have a deliberate and persuasive element, which can sometimes be manipulative or wrong. This concept is very important in understanding any political communication message, and there is an essential role played by political actors that contain both ideological and interests in it. Depending on the situation these political communication messages may adopt the nature and form of news, which at the same time can also contain propaganda or false (disinformative) news.

Political campaigns, which are the center of political communication, are important to include ethical elements. The form of communication carried out by political actors aims to gain voter influence through social engineering that is able to evoke emotions (Heiss, Schmuck, & Matthes, 2019). This is a consequence of social changes that weaken the boundaries between various fields of life, so that politics is now intertwined with certain emotional experiences of politics. People's relationship with politics has changed, and has become more like a mode of consumption (Coelho, Correia, & Medina, 2017). As with consumption patterns, voters will face the same thing when faced with forms of communication by political actors. Diverse voter segmentation will have an impact on the presence of disinformation campaign content in the form of hoaxes and hate speech as an actor's populism strategy to get voters' attention.

Populism and Actor's Political Strategy

Populism was originally an abstract concept. Not many previous arguments have been able to explain the concept of populism. The challenge of defining populism is partly due to the fact that the term populism was previously used in various fields such as geographical, historical, and ideological. (Gidron & Bonikowski, 2014). In general, populism is defined as a movement that is part of the struggle for hegemony and power. Populists often take advantage of dissatisfaction with the ruler or government in power (Abts & Rummens, 2007). To show its form of dissatisfaction, populism can be seen as an ideology,

discursive style, and political mobilization (Moffitt & Tormey, 2014). As an ideology, populism depends on the social and political context mobilized by populist actors (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2012). Meanwhile, in a discursive context, populism is defined as rhetoric that is constructed through selectively used political expressions (Gidron & Bonikowski, 2014).

Rhetoric is a concept used to explain how political actors as communicators convey messages to audiences by means of persuasion (Lawson-Tancred, 1991). Rhetoric then developed into a political strategy of political actors to gain voter support in the political market. In conveying their ideas in political campaigns, communicators use narratives based on the concepts of ethos, pathos, and logos (Druckman, Kifer, & Parkin, 2019). This idea places political actors to focus their attention on the emotions of the audience because the arguments or narratives that are built put forward strong evidence and the ethics on which they are based. Narratives that were originally known as a tool of persuasion of political actors to society have recently turned into based on political behavior seen in society (Justin Fisher et al., 2018). The use of narrative has turned into a propaganda tool that is used as an actor's political strategy and forms polarization because of the inclusion of a strong emotional aspect that is built by involving aspects of hatred and fear which then directs voters' political choices.

The power of rhetoric through narrative is capable of manipulating the political choices of others, or influencing one's thoughts to support or oppose an idea (Dowding, 2016, 2018). The formation of political choices or voting preferences through populist narratives is caused by emotional attachments and beliefs (Urbinati, 2019). The political strategy of actors who use populist narratives is increasingly massive and reaches very large voters due to the presence of digital media, especially social media. The characteristics of digital media that provide easy and fast access to information provide opportunities for political actors to gain public attention through populist narratives that are shared through social media. This narrative is then reproduced and distributed due to the interaction between actors and voters who become social media users.

Research Methods

This study uses a qualitative research method with a literature study approach to collect materials related to political campaigns and actors' populism strategies. The source of this research data comes from library materials related to the research theme. Collecting data by collecting literature, books, journals, documents or other data sources related to research. Furthermore, cross-checking of data from the main source and comparison with other sources is carried out for further interpretation.

Results and Discussions
Political Campaign Narratives and New Media Effects

Political campaigns that are distributed through impressions on the media will be able to shape the political tendencies or preferences of voters. The characteristics of social media that can broadcast and distribute campaign content that are narrative or audio-visual in nature will have an effect on the cognitive, affective, and behavior of the audience so that it will be able to shape voter behavior. Although it is still being debated, there are not a few scholars who state that the effects of media have an impact on the audience or audience, and in the context of this research it has an impact on voters. Dayan and Katz (1992) explain that media events are hegemonic manipulations. The media displays coverage of political events that have media and political interests behind them. The presence of the internet and new media such as the web and social media brings major changes in the practice of political elite campaigns in many democracies, including Indonesia. Almost all political candidates have their own websites and social media (Druckman, Kifer, & Michael, 2010) and in the context of the 2019 presidential election in Indonesia, each candidate also has one. Candidates pack their social media with content containing campaign messages.

In its current development, political campaigning on social media is a core feature of contemporary democracy (Bright et al., 2019). The increasing number of citizens who use the internet and social media has attracted the interest of political elites and political parties, so that they use social media to distribute campaign content. As a result, the role of the internet and social media in providing information to voters stimulates their greater political involvement and shapes voters' political preferences. The results of Bode's research (2016) explain how the relationship between social media and political behavior has developed in recent years and shows that social media plays an important role in political discourse in the modern media environment. This of course can create populism and shape voters' political preferences because social media gives populist actors the freedom to articulate their campaign populist ideology and narrative (Engesser, Ernst, Esser, & Büchel, 2017).

One of the first and most important assumptions of the study of mass communication is the assumption that the media and their content have significant and substantial effects (Perse, 2001). In general, media effects are usually described as cognitive, affective, or behavioral (Valkenburg, Peter, & Walther, 2016). Cognitive effects are effects related to information acquisition, what people learn, how beliefs are structured (or restructured) in the mind, and how information needs are satisfied or not. This effect includes what is learned and how much is learned. Affective effects involve the formation of attitudes, or positive or negative evaluations about

something. While behavioral effects are observable actions associated with media exposure. The most studied types of behavioral effects focus on behaviors related to social problems, either for or against them.

The cognitive effect of voters will encourage them to search for political information based on what they want so that it will shape political choices and ultimately become one of the factors that cause polarization. Political actors produce disinformation content in the form of hoaxes and hate speech because of their previous political experience in elections. The affective effect area will evoke an emotional reaction to the actor's campaign content in the form of hoaxes and hate speech, causing emotions of anger or fear. In the end, the populism strategy carried out in the actor's political campaign will shape polarized voter behavior and ideological political choices.

Deontology Ethics and Actor Populism Strategy

Ethics is an important thing in political contestation, one of which is dominant in the political campaigns of actors. Campaign actions are logical actions taken by political actors with the aim of gaining influence from their supporters or voters. Political contestations such as elections aim to gain power. In the realm of the struggle for power, the struggle to get it must take into account that the power obtained is for the common good as a community and a nation unit that lives in values that have been internalized before. Therefore, the ethical struggle in political campaigns is not only about political actors but extends freedom and creates fair issues for the common good (Richey, 2018).

In a democracy, communication actors, researchers, citizen associations, and politicians must be committed to the value of freedom. The state must guarantee and facilitate the realization of these values. This objective dimension is directly related to meta-ethics which leads to the theorizing of moral material whose understanding is broader than just normative ethics. So at stake include various rights and freedoms. In essence, meta-ethics wants to reflect on the status, rationality and legitimacy of communication actors, information structures, discourses and ethical approaches in terms of freedom of expression and the right to information (Haryatmoko, 2017). Therefore, ethics becomes very important in political contestation where political campaigns are the center of political communication.

The deontological approach in the Kantian tradition places the moral and rational at the center of ethical theory (Spahn, 2020). The assumption is that the moral law held by moral agents is a rational framework for moral evaluation of the actions of (potentially) free-willed rational agents. Rational agents in political contestation can be political actors, media owners and journalists, as well as voters or the public. The general image of a moral agent is a person who makes decisions. Moral decisions are the product of extensive calculations. Moral

freedom is based on the rational capacity to discern choices, make decisions, and set intentions (Narvaez & Lapsley, 2005).

The deontological approach departs from the challenge of freedom as a human quest. In daily practice, humans are often faced with events or events that must be chosen to be realized at a certain time. The moral law by Kant is interpreted as an answer to the question of freedom (Heinzelmann, 2018). The goal is to justify which goal we should strive for and which course of action is the most reasonable to choose. Kant argues that to answer strategic questions about human means and ends not only based on reason but also morals it is possible to answer the question of which goal should be chosen in the first place. The fact that morality is seen as deeply rooted in the theory of practical rationality has certain consequences for the deontological approach.

It is examined from the mapping of ethical problems in the perspective of communication ethics due to the weak deontology of journalism. The problem of freedom usually stops at the relationship between freedom of expression and responsibility. Even though the problem is broader than just the relationship between freedom and responsibility (Haryatmoko, 2017). In addition, this happens because of the discovery of manipulative journalism which is part of the development of post-truth technicalities. By following the logic of journalism, it can be said that this populist narrative is a means of killing the opponent's character.

The use of populism strategies by political actors through hoaxes and hate speech is an action based on the rationality of the actor. Political actors as rational agents and moral agents from the beginning have taken into account the impacts that will be found (Moody-Adams, 2017). The implication of the Kantian deontological approach, also called deontological epistemic rationalism, argues that to find and justify moral norms is to use reason. Other abilities, such as feeling, intuition, or tradition, play no role in the basic framework. This implies a certain optimism, that reason can answer moral questions with logical categorization and necessity. From this it can be explained that the use of populism strategies deviates from moral goals for the common good because populism strategies can ignite emotions, hatred and fear in the community or the political market of voters.

The next implication of the deontological approach is related to human behavior (individuals) and concerns what is called motivational rationalism (Cavallar, 2012; Walla, 2015). This context looks at how the actions of political actors carrying out populist strategies are a basic part of moral agency. Therefore, individual reflection on what is the most rationale in using populism strategies to do is an important element of moral agency. The action of using a populism campaign strategy will be considered not in favor of the moral of the common good

because the motive for the action of the populism strategy will ultimately have an impact on division or polarization and create emotions in the form of anger and fear. It is moral if the motive for the action is to do the right thing as the motive for the action. This strict motivational rationalism is often criticized as being too strict, because it is too burdensome to meet these high standards.

The deontological approach is also related to human (collective) decision making in society and can be called deliberation rationalism (Cavallar, 2012). The actor's political campaign should open up space for discussion to voters. Political campaigns that are built and run must provide a place for the public or voters to exchange arguments with political actors. In essence, people's choices about political campaign information and what they decide are based on rational considerations, not on populist issues. This means that the power of argumentation aimed at a better life together becomes the basis for collective decision-making.

Conclusion

The deontological approach emphasizes the importance of moral and rational as the center of ethics that aims to create the common good. Political communication carried out with the actor's populism strategy can be seen as a strategy that ignores morals for the common good. The use of populism strategies occurs because of experiences in previous elections that have formed polarization in society. The spread of populist narratives through the use of new media makes political actors and voters practice journalism in certain echo chambers that have an impact on polarization. The practice of producing and distributing populist narratives such as hoaxes and hate speech by political actors and voters creates emotions and fears that ultimately have an impact on division or polarization in society. The experience in the previous election of social media technology can then be seen pessimistically as a threat to replace communicative rationality with strategic rationality because one of the impacts of populist narratives is polarization. This is because media effects are capable of creating filter bubbles or echo chambers so that the user is exposed only to their own view. This effect can also result in the discussion space not being challenged against different views which in turn will form polarization.

In the view of deontological ethics, the use of populism strategies through hoax narratives and hate speech is an ethical violation because it ignores the common good which is the goal of ethics. The content of an actor's political campaign should be the actor's responsibility based on rational and moral goals that are faced with the common good. The use of populist narratives through hoaxes and hate speech in addition to creating polarization will have an impact on the decline of democracy.

The results of this research are useful for political actors and voters to see how important ethics are in political communication, especially during campaigns. The use of populist narratives that ignore the morals of the common good can have an impact on the polarization of society and weaken the good values that have been internalized in the lives of Indonesian people.

This study has a weakness because it only uses a deontological ethical view in analyzing the problem. Further research can explore using theories or other ethical approaches contained in the realm of political communication studies. The results of future research are expected to be able to fill and complete the field of election studies in the context of political communication ethics.

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