

Corpus Linguistics on the Impression Management Strategy of Indonesian Public Officials after Covid-19 Denial Statements

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With the Covid-19 pandemic, public officials in Indonesia were prone to making inaccurate claims and to enacting policies that the public might have overlooked due to a lack of understanding of complex situations. However, after making these mistakes, public officials needed to restore their reputation and create a positive impression. This study aimed to investigate the impression management strategies employed by Indonesian public officials following such incidents. The researchers analysed a dataset of 2,000 Instagram captions from seven public officials over the course of a year, totalling 13,725 words and 196,154 tokens, using corpus linguistic techniques such as frequent words and keyword lists. The findings revealed that officials used different strategies such as ingratiation, self-promotion and supplication to manage their impression, and that positive attitudes and hard work were the main tools used by officials to improve their public image.

Keywords: impression management, public officials, Indonesia, Covid-19, corpus linguistics

Introduction

When Covid-19 first emerged, the Indonesian public witnessed their government, through its public official representatives, claiming they are able to properly manage the Covid-19 pandemic (Mietzner, 2020; Djalante et al., 2020b). Up until early March of 2020, the Minister of Health announced that Indonesia was free from positive cases and associated this with prayers (Lindsey and Smith, 2020). Other public officials urged people to continue living a healthy life by consuming vegetables as well as traditional herbal drinks (Olivia, Gibson and Nasrudin, 2020). Other public officials also claimed that the absence of cases was due to Indonesia's tropical climate (Lindsey and Smith, 2020). While the Indonesian public were witnessing these various denials, there were concerns over the impact that the virus might have on trade, investment and tourism (Gandasari and Dwidienawati, 2020). Accordingly, the government made a rather substantial investment to boost tourist visits, particularly foreign tourists. Meanwhile, other countries were imposing strict restrictions on foreign travel (Djalante et al., 2020a; Sevindik, Tosun and Yilmaz, 2021).

Ultimately, on 2 March 2020, the government announced its first Covid-19 positive case and gradually began to prohibit mass gatherings, advising the public to obey health protocols (Olivia, Gibson and Nasrudin, 2020; Ssenyonga, 2021; Temenggung et al., 2021). This policy was also followed by an instruction to apply a large-scale social restriction policy and prohibit international travellers from entering Indonesia (Sparrow, Dartanto and Hartwig, 2020). The Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia was exacerbated by a policy direction that arguably prioritised economic considerations over public health. The government of Indonesia, in this case, was seen as having bungled the situation, mostly due to its policy choices (Lutfi et al., 2020; Asmorowati, Schubert and Ningrum, 2021; Riadi and Erdiyansyah, 2021). Eventually, the government had to pay dearly for the denials made by public officials. Furthermore, they also had to immediately restore their image as these mistakes posed a danger to their public image.

There were several public accusations relating to the Covid-19 denials in Indonesia. First, there are those who believed that the government concealed Covid-19 cases for particular purposes (Gandasari and Dwidienawati, 2020; Mietzner, 2020; Nurhayati and Purnama, 2021). Additionally, at the start of the pandemic, hate speech against China and communism became more pronounced (Ikhwan, Yulianto and Parahita, 2019; Parahita and Yulianto, 2020). This mainly consisted of accusations directed at the Chinese for having introduced the virus in Indonesia, and that the virus was a Chinese conspiracy. All in all, these matters undoubtedly showed the decline in the public's trust towards public officials.

For politicians, reputation is a major concern because they hold their positions as a result of the public having at least a passably favourable opinion of them (Talbot and Boiral, 2021; Pollach, Ravazzani and Maier, 2022; Wu et al., 2022). Once they became aware of the risk of losing the public's trust, public officials attempted to create positive impressions by addressing these accusations, defending themselves, and ensuring that they maintain a good impression before the public. Losing public trust would be

dangerous, not only because they would lose the public's trust to mobilise their behaviour, but their political career as well. They subsequently, tried to prevent such threats or at least attempted to alleviate the consequences of threats against their good reputation (Bhaskar, Flower and Sellers, 2021; Talbot and Boiral, 2021). Hence, giving good impressions and building a good reputation are important assets for public officials as well as governments in general.

Accordingly, selecting appropriate content and captions for public officials to share on social media is a key element in creating impressions (Matejek and Gössling, 2014; DePaula and Dincelli, 2016; Tække, 2017; Tung, Tse and Chan, 2021). A body of literature has discussed how companies, including CEOs, develop their impression management on social media in the cases of pharmaceutical companies, airline companies and the hospitality industry (DePaula and Dincelli, 2016; Tække, 2017; Zheng et al., 2020; Al-Shatti and Ohana, 2021; Im, Kim and Miao, 2021; Tung, Tse and Chan, 2021). Generally speaking, impression management has become a crucial part of their activities, and they specifically design strategies in their annual reports, social media content and CEO letters for such matters (Lappas et al., 2017; Tække, 2017; Zheng et al., 2020; Chen et al., 2021; Im, Kim and Miao, 2021; Altahmazi, 2022). However, there has not been much literature to date discussing public organisations and officials, particularly using the impression management theory. The differences between public and business or private organisations may lead to diverging results, as both seek different interests and have different values.

The public might have forgotten the denials and claims that public officials made in response to Covid-19 at the start of the pandemic, but public officials do have a political responsibility for these matters and these efforts may lead to positive responses (Im, Kim and Miao, 2021; Ou and Wong, 2021; Wong, Ou and Wilson, 2021; Carnevale and Gangloff, 2022). In doing so, there will surely be suspicions from the public, particularly among those who have lost their trust in public officials. It is crucial to identify which actions public officials have taken to establish positive impressions through their communication channels. By developing well-designed strategies, public officials can strategically re-communicate their commitments on issues related to Covid-19 and create a positive impression that conveys trust.

Public officials are responsible for effective communication with the public during a state of crisis, including the Covid-19 pandemic (Sobral et al., 2020; Hartanto, Agussani and Dalle, 2021; Power and Crosthwaite, 2022). It is interesting to see how public officials got the public to believe in their narrative of Covid-19: how they strengthened the public's trust that the government was capable of handling the crisis, and how they encouraged behaviours aligned with policies enacted only a short time after public officials had denied the presence and hazards of the virus (You, 2020; Massarani and Neves, 2021; Wodak, 2021; Alnizar and Manshur, 2022). There is a collection of literature that has discussed this matter which found that opposing claims made by public officials affect different handling of Covid-19 and ultimately have implications on different results in handling (Sobral et al., 2020; Hyland-Wood et al., 2021; Nasr, 2021; Talbot and Boiral, 2021; Wodak, 2021).

In this study, by adhering to the theory of impression management (Goffman, 1956), the main argument to corroborate in the research is that the impressions shown by public officials create a collective meaning because, essentially, impression management requires reciprocity by comprehending public responses and also giving cues in responding to certain social incidences (Beelitz and Merkl-Davies, 2012; Le and Bartlett, 2014; Blum, Smith and Sanford, 2021; Ono, 2022). By analysing the language public officials used, fundamental engagement with social norms and values along with the process of restructuring public responses and understanding would be reflected accordingly (Craig and Brennan, 2012; D'Northwood, 2017; Bu, Connor-Linton and Wang, 2020; Jones et al., 2020; Altahmazi, 2022). To achieve this, we carried out our research by using corpus linguistics techniques, which combines quantitative and qualitative methods to find unique and common patterns in the Instagram posts of public officials who denied the existence of Covid-19.

Impression management theory

Impression management is “the construct used to articulate how individuals or organizations manage their legitimacy, reputation or image through communicating their activities and goals” (Perkiss et al. 2021). Impression management theory began with the concept proposed by Erving Goffman (1956), which was called self-presentation theory. In the theory of self-presentation, Goffman made an analogy of a performance where a person plays two roles in their life. The first is a front-stage role relating to their profession, class, position, or other social attributes that expresses a standard which is, deliberately or unconsciously, applied by the individual when assuming this role and conducting social interactions, while the second is a back-stage role in which the true self is more likely presented.

The theory of self-presentation, or more frequently called impression management theory, was initially developed in socio-psychological studies, but has been much implemented in research about organisation. Impression management theory serves as a conceptual framework that explains how organisations manage crisis communication through corporate narrative strategies carried out via CEO letters, bank president statement, annual reports, CSR and sustainability reporting, also including social media posts (Im, Kim and Miao, 2021; Perkiss et al. 2021). Jones and Pittman (1982) prefer to use the term self-presentation strategy to refer to efforts made by individuals or organisations as actors to create a desired impression on certain individuals or groups (stakeholders).

Jones and Pittman (1982) proposed the taxonomy of five classes of self-presentational strategies: ingratiation, intimidation, self-promotion, exemplification and supplication (Jones and Pittman, 1982), as summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Impression management strategies, definitions and key characteristics

| Impression management strategies | Definitions | Key characteristics |
|----------------------------------|---|--|
| Ingratiation | Ingratiation is a self-presentational approach in which individuals and organisations form social behaviours based on features that other people or parties like, and associate themselves with them through characteristics like humour, warmth, reliability, attention and physical attraction. It strives to promote likability. | To demonstrate warmth, wit, dependability and charm. |
| Intimidation | Intimidation refers to actors trying to convince a target that they are in power, intimidators strive to be trusted and feared. | To create harm, peril, anxiety and distress. |
| Self-promotion | Self-promotion is a self-presentational strategy in which actors put more efforts in seeking attribution of competence instead of likability. | To seek proficiency. |
| Exemplification | Exemplification is a self-presentational strategy used by actors to accentuate their integrity and moral worthiness. | To be trustworthy, self-controlled, altruistic and self-sacrificing. |
| Supplication | Supplication is a self-presentational strategy employed by those lacking resources. An actor using this strategy will emphasise their disadvantages, inabilities and dependence on others. | To ask for help. |

Source: Jones and Pittman, 1982.

Most organisations rely on the accounts tactic to maintain their image and reputation when facing opinion attacks by key constituents (Ginzel, Kramer and Sutton, 2004). There are four types of accounting tactics: denials or defences of innocence, excuses, justifications and apologies (Mohamed, Gardner and Paolillo, 1999). When choosing an accounts tactic, an organisation must consider the level of responsibility that will be claimed as part of their responsibility for the consequences or disruptive actions that have occurred. The denials or defences of innocence tactic implies that organisations reject all forms of responsibility for any problematic situation. The excuses tactic is used when organisations admit to something wrong but the information presented emphasises that the negatives were caused by external conditions or by the environment. When using the justification tactic, organisations will, at a certain level, admit responsibility for the disruptive action(s) that occurred, but explain that the disruptive action(s) or condition were unavoidable for certain reasons. Organisations employ the apologies tactic when they fully acknowledge their responsibility for any undesirable impacts and convey their apology to the disadvantaged party. The disclaimers tactic is used to prevent negative reactions from a targeted population by giving cues before any undesirable incidents

occur. The organisational handicapping tactic is a tactic applied when organisations feel that their efforts at fulfilling a task seem to be unsuccessful, which forces the organisation to try to help the target audience to adjust their expectations to the organisation's performance (Mohamed, Gardner and Paolillo, 1999). Other impression management tactics that organisations use include restitution (offering compensation to the affected party for damage caused by the fault of the organisation) and the prosocial behaviour tactic (participating in social or community care movements or initiatives).

Leadership and impression management during the Covid-19 pandemic

In a state of crisis, leadership plays a significant role in helping their organisations to endure and survive the situation in one piece (Grint, 2020; Wilson, 2020; Halley et al., 2021; Larsson and Sjöqvist, 2021; Ou and Wong, 2021; Whelehan, Algeo and Brown, 2021). Leaders, under such conditions, have to communicate effectively and efficiently in order to organise their followers to achieve their goal (Comfort et al., 2020; Sobral et al., 2020; Kim et al., 2021; Wodak, 2021). As a consequence of such practices, there is a collection of articles investigating leaders' communication and how they bring their followers along within the context of global crises (Sobral et al., 2020; Al-Shatti and Ohana, 2021; Kim et al., 2021; Ling et al., 2021). In this case, what leaders express to the public is a political statement that reflects their leadership.

The collaborative handling carried out throughout the Covid-19 pandemic has brought discussions on leadership, which initially focused on leaders, to shift to a more relational perspective between leaders and their followers (Densten and Sarro, 2012; Indrayanto, Burgess and Dayaram, 2014; Sørensen and Villadsen, 2018; Sobral et al., 2020). In this case, leaders, using their political statements, established a particular social identity and tried to direct their followers to create a particular response because of the language use and word choices they made (Sobral et al., 2020; Kim et al., 2021; Power and Crosthwaite, 2022). In this matter, the reconstruction of collective identity, encouraging collaborative action, lessening disintegration and prioritising universal humanitarian values are forms of impression management that can drive behavioural changes that align with their advice (Comfort et al., 2020; Haeng-Mi, Hye-Ryun and Bohyun, 2021; Vergara, Sarmiento and Lagman, 2021). Other findings also indicate that built collectivity, reflection over ownership of collective identity and a common sentiment strengthen social identity and encourage sustainable actions and behaviours, as well as prepare the public for mobilisation (Rainey et al., 2021; Williams et al., 2021; Alnizar and Manshur, 2022).

An outcome of shifting the analytical focus from the centric leader is an increased attention to the leader's use of language. Analysing the language used by leaders can reveal strategies for cultivating followers' sympathy and facilitating a desired understanding of the crisis (Sobral et al., 2020; Montiel, Uyheng and Dela Paz, 2021; Rainey et al., 2021; Wodak, 2021). This may occur due to the amalgamation of the meaning or definition of crisis, which is considered an objective issue that still maintains subjective

space to facilitate the legitimacy of other interests. Furthermore, defining crisis as a threat indicates efforts to normalise a significant number of victims and losses (Sobral et al., 2020; Sidi, Glikson and Cheshin, 2021; Lanza et al., 2022).

The literature asserts the significance of impression management for managing crises, including the Covid-19 pandemic (Ou and Wong, 2021; Sidi, Glikson and Cheshin, 2021; Talbot and Boiral, 2021; Carnevale and Gangloff, 2022; Ono, 2022). Therefore, it is important to investigate the process in which collective meaning is created from impression management because creating meaning is at the heart of leadership in a crisis. This also includes questions relating to how leaders demonstrate their leadership style, how leaders develop a relationship with their followers, and how leaders objectively and subjectively define the crisis to gain the public's attention in order to carry out the mobilisation process. By focusing on the language that leaders use and the word choices they make, the political and psychological potential of the words they present to the public is instilled in the collective arrangement where they operate (Im, Kim and Miao, 2021; Sidi, Glikson and Cheshin, 2021). Language, including the word choices made by leaders, is also a reflection of their followers, particularly concerning how they understand and interpret the world (Craig and Brennan, 2012; Cruz, 2016; Vaičekauskienė, 2018).

Research methodology

The current research employed corpus linguistics techniques, which has been widely used to analyse impression management strategies of companies and leaders in crisis situations (D'Northwood, 2017; Yan, Aerts and Thewissen, 2019; Bu, Connor-Linton and Wang, 2020; Lee, 2020; Ou and Wong, 2021; Ou, Wong and Huang, 2021; Wong, Ou and Wilson, 2021; Altahmazi, 2022). Corpus linguistics techniques are part of linguistics and one of the techniques used to understand language in various media (Nesselhauf, 2005; Partington, Duguid and Taylor, 2013). A corpus is a large collection of machine-readable texts used to provide an as accurate illustration as possible about the tendency of particular words used including their quantity (McEnery and Wilson, 2001; O'Keeffe and McCarthy, 2010; Partington, Duguid and Taylor, 2013). Out of the various analyses that can be produced by this research, two corpus-based analytical methods were selected, namely: frequent words and keyword list (Partington, 2012; Ou and Wong, 2021; Power and Crosthwaite, 2022).

In order to improve the public's opinions of them, public officials continually engage in impression management. Research on social media sites such as Instagram have demonstrated that the Internet can give public officials a forum to display their best selves, manage a variety of impressions and market themselves. To gain a deeper understanding of how public officials currently use Instagram, we applied corpus linguistics techniques (a list of frequently occurring words and keywords) to the public statements of seven Indonesian public officials. Although Instagram is primarily a visual tool, we noticed that captions provided context for the images and allowed public officials to add their personal voice.

Since this study examines public officials’ impression management, we focused our analyses on seven public officials who made claims denying Covid-19 or who issued erroneous policies for handling Covid-19 in Indonesia. Initially, we searched for their official Instagram account by using Instagram’s search feature, and when we did not find their account, we tried searching via the official website of the government organisation they lead. The data collection process was done by querying captions of Instagram posts within the period of a year after they made a false claim. Essentially, we wanted to examine what they were doing during that year to improve their image. The rationale for selecting a one-year period for the present study stems from the governmental budgeting process, which typically requires the identification and resolution of problems over a minimum of one fiscal year. Table 2 presents information of the accounts that were part of our investigation.

Table 2: Research samples

| No. | Name of public official | Position | Blunder statement | Date of statement | Instagram account | Number of collected posts |
|-----|-------------------------|---|---|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 | Ma’ruf Amin | Vice President | Many kyai and ulama always recite <i>qunut</i> prayer, and I also recite the <i>qunut</i> prayer. That is why corona stays away from Indonesia. | 29 February 2020 | @kyai_marufamin | 395 |
| 2 | Mahfud MD | Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal and Security Affairs | Because [getting a] permit is complicated in Indonesia, the coronavirus cannot enter. But the omnibus law on employment permit keeps on going. | 15 February 2020 | @mohmahfudmd | 136 Done |
| 3 | Budi Karya | Minister of Transportation | But (this) is a joke with the President ya, God willing ya, Covid-19 (virus) does not enter Indonesia because every day we eat <i>nasi kucing</i> [fist-sized portion rice dish with toppings], so we are immune. | 17 February 2020 | @budikaryas | 300 Done |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---------------------------|---|---|------------------|-----------------------|-------------|
| 4 | Syahrul Yasin Limpo | Minister of Agriculture | The Eucalyptus Corona Antivirus made by the Indonesian Agency for Agricul- tural Research and Development (IAARD) of the Ministry of Agriculture can kill the coronavirus through [direct] contact. 15 minutes of contact can kill 42% of Covid-19, and the longer [the contact] the more are eliminated. | 3 July 2020 | @syasinlimpo | 185 Done |
| 5 | Luhut Pandjaitan | Coordinating Minister for Maritime and Invest- ment Affairs | Based on our model- ling results, Indonesia's weather, the equator is hot and that's also why Covid-19 cannot survive. Given the hot weather, the virus in the throat would die. | 3 April 2020 | @luhut. pandjaitan | 52 |
| 6 | Ridho Yahya | Mayor of Prabumulih | I asked, by closing the schools, research says that closing schools would mean corona disease won't come? No [research indicates so], right? | 16 March 2020 | @ridhoyahya. id | 111 Done |
| 7 | Edy Rahmayadi | Governor of North Sumatera | I, from the start, was not discussing lock- down. You can't be like that. Don't be <i>latah</i> (compulsive imitation of others' actions). Just because [other] people are on lockdown does not mean that North Sumatera should be on lockdown as well. | 22 July 2020 | @edy_ rahmayadi | 821 |

Source: Compiled by the authors.

Once captions were collected, we subsequently transformed them into plain text format (.txt) to be entered in the AntConc application (Anthony, 2019). We have a corpus file for each public official examined in the study. The seven files were then entered into the AntConc application to analyse frequent words. Table 3 presents the results of the corpus analysis for each Instagram account, including data on word types and word tokens, as well as the total corpora.

Table 3: Word types and word tokens

| Corpora | Word types | Word tokens |
|---------------------|------------|-------------|
| Ma'ruf Amin | 6,025 | 50,526 |
| Mahfud MD | 2,449 | 7,825 |
| Budi Karya | 5,862 | 47,220 |
| Syahrul Yasin Limpo | 2,233 | 10,624 |
| Luhut Pandjaitan | 2,904 | 14,223 |
| Ridho Yahya | 1,257 | 4,097 |
| Edy Rahmayadi | 6,384 | 61,637 |
| Total corpora | 13,725 | 196,154 |

Source: Compiled by the authors.

We read the keywords one by one to produce certain themes and accommodate similar words. With regards to reliability, the first and second authors separately categorised the words. The results of categorisation were then submitted to the third author to be adjusted (Bellström et al., 2016). Word categorisation into different themes was finalised by conducting discussions. Keyword lists were made of certain frequent words that have significant frequency in each theme.

This study employed frequent word and keyword analysis. Frequent word analysis involves identifying and examining words that occur with high frequency in a corpus of text, providing insight into the most common or significant words used in a particular context. Frequent words are lexical items with unusual frequencies, whether higher or lower (Partington, 2004; O’Keeffe and McCarthy, 2010; Partington, Duguid and Taylor, 2013; Mahlberg and Brookes, 2021). Frequent words can help identify textual and language styles. First, we identified certain themes inductively to categorise words that contain at least 50 tokens. Based on the inductive analysis results, we found five key themes comprising collaborative action, religiosity, government assistance, public health, and hope and optimism. Each theme consists of words representing it.

In the field of corpus linguistics, “frequent words” pertains to the number of words, morphemes, or keywords present in a given corpus (Oakes, 2019). These words serve as a valuable starting point for analysing the corpus, as they reveal patterns of usage that may point to important themes or topics. For the purposes of this study, the frequency of each word was calculated in terms of absolute and relative frequencies, with the latter

expressed as words per thousand (Sheng, 2021). This was done in recognition of the fact that the size of the corpus portions varied, making the direct comparison of frequency counts problematic (Sheng, 2021). To address this issue, we used a normalisation process, wherein each frequency count was transformed into a value per thousand words (Han, 2020). This value was selected for its ability to provide a common denominator for both corpora while remaining in proximity to their overall sizes. It is worth noting that the choice of a normalising number must be made with care, as using values that are either too low or too high may produce misleading differences. As such, fixed factors such as per thousand or per million words, as recommended by Shirazizadeh (2019) should be utilised judiciously.

The second is keyword list analysis, which allows researchers to obtain keywords that are more significant than others (Baker et al., 2008; D'Northwood, 2017; Joharry and Turiman, 2020). A keyword is a term that appears more frequently than normal in one corpus when compared to a separate, typically larger reference corpus (Brezina, 2018). A crucial aspect of keyword analysis in corpus linguistics involves ascertaining the value of a given word using a statistical significance test, such as log-likelihood (Han, 2020). Unlike frequent words, which furnish absolute or raw frequency data, a keyword list provides information on relative frequencies and can be instrumental in identifying the primary themes present in a corpus (Han, 2020).

In this study, the statistical measure employed to gauge keyword strength is based on Keynes values. The determination of a cut-off point for identifying significant keywords was informed by a statistical threshold, while the ranking of keywords was accomplished via an effect size metric (Han, 2020). Finally, the effect size threshold was utilised to identify the cut-off point for determining the strength of association between a given keyword and the target phenomenon (Han, 2020).

The keyword list was identified by comparing one corpus with another. The first corpus was that of a public official, while the second was a combination of corpora from other public officials who were not included in the former. The primary objective of conducting a comparison between corpora is to ensure that the presence of certain lexemes, which are likely to be associated with impression management, can be attributed to a particular public official. By utilising a keyword list, we were able to successfully identify salient words, employing a statistical threshold of $p < 0.05$ (Han, 2020). In presenting our findings, we report the frequency, Keynes, and effect size of each word. The ranking of words is determined by the effect size, as it is widely considered to be a more accurate indicator of the strength of association between the word and the target official (Han, 2020). It should be noted that the Keynes value may be accompanied by a plus or minus sign, indicating whether the word is used more or less frequently than in the comparative corpora.

Findings and discussion

This section presents the research findings. We used two analyses of corpus linguistics, namely: frequent words and keyword list.

Frequent words

Collaborative action

Collaborative action is a theme constituting calls from leaders to promote collaborations among stakeholders, particularly between public officials and their followers. Collaborative action refers to efforts in appealing to the public to jointly prevent, combat and lessen the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. The words we collected were pronouns and/or nouns such as *kita* (we/us), *warga* (resident), *rakyat* (the people), *saudara* (brothers/sisters), *bantuan* (assistance), *kerjasama* (collaboration), *penerapan* (implementation), *pertemuan* (meeting, momentum), *penyebaran* (dissemination) and *prestasi* (achievement). Verbs that we found included *menjaga* (to guard/to maintain), *mewujudkan* (to realise/to achieve), and *membuat* (to make); along with the adverb *bersama* (together).

Table 4: Frequent words under the Collaborative Action theme

| Collaborative Action | Frequency | Word frequency/1,000 words |
|---|-----------|----------------------------|
| <i>kita</i> (we/us) (2,224) | 2,224 | 11.34 |
| <i>bersama</i> (together) (738) | 738 | 3.76 |
| <i>seluruh</i> (entire) (386) | 386 | 1.97 |
| <i>menjaga</i> (to guard/to maintain) (285) | 285 | 1.45 |
| <i>mari</i> (let's) (187) | 187 | 0.95 |
| <i>warga</i> (resident) (170) | 170 | 0.87 |
| <i>rakyat</i> (the people) (157) | 157 | 0.80 |
| <i>saudara</i> (brother/sister) (136) | 136 | 0.69 |
| <i>kerjasama</i> (collaboration) (105) | 105 | 0.54 |
| <i>mewujudkan</i> (to achieve/to realise) (105) | 105 | 0.54 |
| <i>penerapan</i> (implementation) (102) | 102 | 0.52 |
| <i>pertemuan</i> (meeting) (94) | 94 | 0.48 |
| momentum (84) | 84 | 0.43 |
| <i>penyebaran</i> (dissemination) (81) | 81 | 0.41 |
| <i>prestasi</i> (achievement) (50) | 50 | 0.25 |

Source: Compiled by the authors.

The word *kita* in our findings shows that the effort in handling Covid-19 is a joint effort. The word *kita* represents “you and I”, and thus qualifies endeavours to counter the impact of Covid-19 as efforts that must be done together. This elaboration is also used to explain the occurrence of the words *bersama*, *seluruh* (entire/all) and *kerjasama*. The occurrence of the word *mari* (let's) is a call to jointly perform certain actions relating to the prevention of Covid-19 and its impacts. Subsequently, the words *warga*, *rakyat*

and *saudara* indicate an appeal to residents and the people and referring to the public as brothers and sisters. Mentioning the word *saudara* in Indonesian suggests a close relationship similar to that between family members.

Hope and optimism

Hope and optimism were also themes which public officials accentuated in their posts about Covid-19 pandemic policies and situation. Emphasis on these themes was used to maintain the public's trust in the government's performance in handling the pandemic. The pandemic had various deleterious effects not only on health, but also on the economy and public welfare, which could in turn generate negative reactions from the public. In such circumstances, public officials tried to calm people down with positive narratives representing hope or optimism.

The types of words emphasising hope and optimism often occurred in the form of conjunctions such as *untuk* (for), *menjadi* (to become), *akan* (will), *semoga* (hopefully) and *agar* (so that). The word *semoga* bears the meaning of hope amidst the difficult situation faced throughout the pandemic. The word *akan* was used to emphasise that real actions conducted by the government in the form of activity plans and policies to address the Covid-19 pandemic would certainly be able to get the pandemic situation under control. Other words with the theme of hope and optimism occurred in verb forms with positive meanings like *berjuang* (to fight/to struggle), *meningkatkan* (to improve/to enhance), *membangun* (to develop), *mendukung* (to support), *mendorong* (to encourage), and *mengapresiasi* (to appreciate). These words, aside from implying the government's real actions, also emphasise the government's reliability and competence in overcoming the pandemic.

Emphasis on the theme of hope and optimism also occurred in noun form like *pemulihan* (recovery), *peningkatan* (improvement/enhancement), *dukungan* (support), *percepatan* (acceleration), *perkembangan* (development), *kemajuan* (progress), and *pertumbuhan* (growth), *prioritas* (priority), and *kesejahteraan* (prosperity). These words indicated that the government cares about the problems that the public is facing in connection with the pandemic and that the government is giving its full attention to handling the pandemic.

Table 5: Frequent words under the Hope and Optimism theme

| Hope and Optimism | Frequency | Frequency/tokens |
|----------------------------------|-----------|------------------|
| <i>untuk</i> (for) (2,550) | 2,550 | 13.00 |
| <i>menjadi</i> (to become) (917) | 917 | 4.67 |
| <i>akan</i> (will) (915) | 915 | 4.66 |
| <i>semoga</i> (hopefully) (700) | 700 | 3.57 |
| <i>agar</i> (so that) (671) | 671 | 3.42 |

| Hope and Optimism | Frequency | Frequency/tokens |
|--|-----------|------------------|
| <i>dapat</i> (can) (636) | 636 | 3.24 |
| <i>lebih</i> (more) (529) | 529 | 2.70 |
| <i>terus</i> (continue) (355) | 355 | 1.81 |
| <i>pembangunan</i> (development) (355) | 355 | 1.81 |
| <i>upaya</i> (effort) (322) | 322 | 1.64 |
| <i>semangat</i> (zeal) (297) | 297 | 1.51 |
| <i>berharap</i> (hopeful) (292) | 292 | 1.49 |
| <i>meningkatkan</i> (to improve/to enhance) (244) | 244 | 1.24 |
| <i>pengembangan</i> (development) (240) | 240 | 1.22 |
| <i>membangun</i> (to build/to develop) (213) | 213 | 1.09 |
| <i>demi</i> (for the sake of) (212) | 212 | 1.08 |
| <i>mendukung</i> (to support) (190) | 190 | 0.97 |
| <i>kondisi</i> (condition) (183) | 183 | 0.93 |
| <i>langkah</i> (step/measure) (151) | 151 | 0.77 |
| <i>mampu</i> (able) (150) | 150 | 0.76 |
| <i>maju</i> (move forward) (146) | 146 | 0.74 |
| <i>pemulihan</i> (recovery) (145) | 145 | 0.74 |
| <i>mendorong</i> (to encourage) (141) | 141 | 0.72 |
| <i>semakin</i> (the more) (139) | 139 | 0.71 |
| <i>peningkatan</i> (improvement/enhancement) (124) | 124 | 0.63 |
| <i>terbaik</i> (the best) (115) | 115 | 0.59 |
| <i>proses</i> (process) (113) | 113 | 0.58 |
| <i>dukungan</i> (support) (111) | 111 | 0.57 |
| <i>sukses</i> (success) (110) | 110 | 0.56 |
| <i>aman</i> (safe) (106) | 106 | 0.54 |
| <i>kesempatan</i> (opportunity) (103) | 103 | 0.53 |
| <i>kesejahteraan</i> (prosperity) (98) | 98 | 0.50 |
| <i>tenaga</i> (power/strength) (97) | 97 | 0.49 |
| <i>mengapresiasi</i> (to appreciate) (95) | 95 | 0.48 |
| <i>prioritas</i> (priority) (95) | 95 | 0.48 |
| <i>tingkat</i> (level) (92) | 92 | 0.47 |
| <i>potensi</i> (potential) (92) | 92 | 0.47 |
| <i>percepatan</i> (acceleration) (91) | 91 | 0.46 |
| <i>perkembangan</i> (development) (87) | 87 | 0.44 |
| <i>harapan</i> (hope) (84) | 84 | 0.43 |
| <i>kemajuan</i> (progress) (77) | 77 | 0.39 |
| <i>berhasil</i> (to be successful) (63) | 63 | 0.32 |
| <i>berjuang</i> (to struggle/to fight) (63) | 63 | 0.32 |
| <i>pertumbuhan</i> (growth) (63) | 63 | 0.32 |

In the frequent word analysis, we found various words that we combined under the themes of collaborative action and hope and optimism. This is part of the *supplication* self-presentational strategy used by those lacking resources, in which the speaker tries to emphasise their disadvantages, inability and dependency on others (Jones and Pittman, 1982). This type of impression management strategy was found in Ridho Yahya's corpus text, as presented in the keyword list analysis. The strategic use of emotion is also part of the efforts to influence the public in order to gain a similar sentiment (Westphal et al., 2012; Sobral et al., 2020; Müller, 2021). In this case, articulating feelings will draw a fully passionate reaction from their followers (Wang et al., 2019; Yan, Aerts and Thewissen, 2019; Lee, 2020). Consequently, the public would follow the emotion of their leader, or in other words, the message disseminated via social media would echo the feelings expressed by their leader.

Religiosity

Religion is an integral element of Indonesian society. Accordingly, religiosity is a theme that public officials utilise to approach their followers. A religious leader is a leader who is highly revered and respected in Indonesian society, and this helped break the chain of Covid-19 transmission. The words we found relating to religiosity included nouns like *mui* (*Majelis Ulama Indonesia* – Indonesian Ulama Council), *umat* (Muslim community), *agama* (religion), *amanah* (trust), *ulama*, *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school), *masjid*, *santri* (students at Islamic boarding schools), *natal* (Christmas) and *amal* (charity). While some verbs we identified include *doa* (prayer), *ibadah* (worship) and *raya* (grand), *merayakan* (celebrate). There are also the words *husnul* (good) and *idul* (re-become – from *Idul Fitri*, i.e. becoming holy again).

In our findings, the word/acronym “mui” explains that efforts in handling Covid-19 should strictly be done for the benefit of the Muslim community. This explanation is represented by the words *syariah* (sharia), *umat*, Islam, *ulama* and *halal*. This suggests that the Covid-19 vaccine in Indonesia is *halal*, clean and free from *najis* (ritually unclean) elements in accordance with MUI's *halal* ruling (fatwa) as an effort to convince Indonesians/their followers to be rid of any doubt in taking the vaccine shot.

Table 6: Frequent words under the Religiosity theme

| Religiosity | Frequency | Frequency/tokens |
|---|-----------|------------------|
| <i>mui</i> (Indonesian Ulama Council) (680) | 680 | 3.47 |
| Allah (390) | 390 | 1.99 |
| <i>syariah</i> (sharia) (275) | 275 | 1.40 |
| <i>umat</i> (Muslim community) (194) | 194 | 0.99 |

| Religiosity | Frequency | Frequency/tokens |
|---|-----------|------------------|
| Islam (185) | 185 | 0.94 |
| <i>agama</i> (religion) (135) | 135 | 0.69 |
| ulama (115) | 115 | 0.59 |
| <i>pesantren</i> (Islamic boarding school) (113) | 113 | 0.58 |
| <i>masjid</i> (mosque) (111) | 111 | 0.57 |
| halal (90) | 90 | 0.46 |
| <i>amanah</i> (trust) (79) | 79 | 0.40 |
| <i>doa</i> (prayer) (79) | 79 | 0.40 |
| <i>ibadah</i> (worship) (78) | 78 | 0.40 |
| <i>santri</i> (students at Islamic boarding schools) (65) | 65 | 0.33 |
| <i>natal</i> (Christmas) (56) | 56 | 0.29 |
| <i>husnul</i> (good) (51) | 51 | 0.26 |
| <i>idul</i> (re-become) (51) | 51 | 0.26 |
| <i>raya</i> (grand) (51) | 51 | 0.26 |
| <i>amal</i> (charity) (51) | 51 | 0.26 |

Source: Compiled by the authors.

Our study found that public officials tried to manage their images as religious leaders. Furthermore, we found that the word Allah was used in all the corpora in varying numbers. This proves again that religion was one of the ways used to produce meaning in terms of people's interpretation of various disasters such as the Covid-19 pandemic. Numerous studies have shown that the level of a person's religiosity helps them to maintain faith during a state of emergency and also supports the psychological aspects of recovery (Adisaputri, 2017; Gianisa and Le De, 2018; Suyadi, Nuryana and Fauzi, 2020). Thus, it is crucial for religious public officials to encourage their followers to keep their spirits up and enhance their religious activities (Hirono and Blake, 2017; Hartanto, Agusani and Dalle, 2021; Nurhayati and Purnama, 2021). This is in line with prior studies which found that messages containing religious elements are more easily received if they establish a theological framework that is already embedded in the community (Adisaputri, 2017; Bentzen, 2019; Suyadi, Nuryana and Fauzi, 2020). This strategy is a part of *ingratiation*, which is the self-presentational phenomenon most frequently found in this study. Most individuals and organisations shape social behaviours by noticing that people or others like them and associate themselves with them through certain characteristics (Goffman, 1956), which in this study is indicated by the religious leader characteristic found in the frequent word and keyword list analysis.

Government assistance

Government assistance is a theme that describes various forms of government interventions as part of impression management during the Covid-19 pandemic. Various types of government assistance were part of the strategy of public officials to lessen economic and social impacts during the Covid-19 pandemic. We grouped the frequent words findings into several categories such as the sectors that received assistance, the actors and the forms of government intervention.

The first category refers to the sectors that received assistance. The occurrence of the word *ekonomi* (economy) represents one of the government programs to assist people's economic conditions through social assistance and the development of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSME) as a form of government assistance to restore the economy. This word also represents the occurrence of the words *program nasional* (national program), *program*, *penanganan* (handling), *keuangan* (finance), *perekonomian* (economic affairs), *UMKM* (MSME) and *bantuan* (assistance) which were also found in the frequent word analysis. Furthermore, we also found the words *sektor transportasi* (transportation sector), *perhubungan* (transportation), *keuangan* (finance), *pendidikan* (education), *pelabuhan* (harbor/port), *jalan* (road), *bandara* (airport), *pangan* (food), *industri* (industry), *lingkungan* (environment), *infrastruktur* (infrastructure) and *pariwisata* (tourism).

The second category refers to actors who played a role in handling the Covid-19 pandemic. The word *kementerian* (ministry) constitutes the government apparatus that assists the president in managing the affairs of certain sectors, while the word *presiden* (president) refers to the highest position in the country. Both words represent the policy of Indonesian leaders who were responsible for assisting and protecting the Indonesian state and nation from the dangers of Covid-19 and for leading its people to prosper by providing assistance in various sectors. We also found other actors such as *daerah* (region), *sektor* (sector), *menteri* (minister), *provinsi* (province), *kabupaten* (regency), *gubernur* (governor), *dinas* (regional office), *TNI* (Indonesian National Armed Forces), *badan* (body/agency), *Jokowi*, *kemenhub* (Ministry of Transportation), *bank*, *polri* (Indonesian National Police), *menkopolhukam* (Coordinating Ministry for Political, Legal and Security Affairs).

In the third category, we found words like *program*, *kebijakan* (policy), *anggaran* (budget), *inovasi* (innovation), *pelayanan* (service/provision), *layanan* (service), *birokrasi* (bureaucracy) and *bantuan* (assistance), which refer to forms of government interventions in handling Covid-19. *Kebijakan* and *program* both suggest the presence of the government through the programs and policies carried out to tackle the Covid-19 pandemic. The next word is *anggaran*, indicating that there is a set of financial resources allocated to tackle the Covid-19 pandemic. Then, the word *inovasi* suggests that there is a particular, out of the ordinary method for carrying out policies, programs, or activities. The words *birokrasi*, *pelayanan* and *layanan* indicates that interventions were done through the provision of services.

Table 7: Frequent words under the Government Assistance theme

| Government Assistance | Frequency | Frequency/tokens |
|--|-----------|------------------|
| <i>ekonomi</i> (economy) (614) | 614 | 2.80 |
| <i>nasional</i> (national) (550) | 550 | 2.66 |
| <i>negara</i> (state/country) (521) | 521 | 2.41 |
| program (472) | 472 | 2.33 |
| <i>bangsa</i> (nation) (457) | 457 | 2.17 |
| <i>transportasi</i> (transportation) (425) | 425 | 2.10 |
| <i>daerah</i> (region) (411) | 411 | 1.93 |
| <i>kementerian</i> (ministry) (378) | 378 | 1.71 |
| <i>presiden</i> (president) (336) | 336 | 1.68 |
| <i>memberikan</i> (provide) (330) | 330 | 1.68 |
| <i>kerja</i> (work) (330) | 330 | 1.58 |
| <i>perhubungan</i> (transportation) (310) | 310 | 1.24 |
| <i>sektor</i> (sector) (244) | 244 | 1.11 |
| <i>menteri</i> (minister) (217) | 217 | 1.07 |
| <i>penanganan</i> (handling) (209) | 209 | 1.03 |
| <i>provinsi</i> (province) (202) | 202 | 1.02 |
| <i>keuangan</i> (finance) (200) | 200 | 0.98 |
| <i>kabupaten</i> (regency) (192) | 192 | 0.94 |
| <i>gubernur</i> (governor) (185) | 185 | 0.94 |
| <i>pendidikan</i> (education) (184) | 184 | 0.92 |
| <i>dinas</i> (regional office) (181) | 181 | 0.88 |
| jakarta (173) | 173 | 0.83 |
| <i>pelabuhan</i> (harbor/port) (163) | 163 | 0.82 |
| <i>jalan</i> (road) (160) | 160 | 0.81 |
| <i>bandara</i> (airport) (158) | 158 | 0.80 |
| TNI (Indonesian National Armed Forces) (156) | 156 | 0.76 |
| <i>pangan</i> (food) (149) | 149 | 0.72 |
| <i>industri</i> (industry) (142) | 142 | 0.72 |
| <i>teknologi</i> (technology) (142) | 142 | 0.72 |
| <i>perekonomian</i> (economic affairs) (141) | 141 | 0.68 |
| <i>kunjungan</i> (visit) (134) | 134 | 0.67 |
| <i>kebijakan</i> (policy) (132) | 132 | 0.65 |
| <i>membantu</i> (help/assist) (128) | 128 | 0.63 |
| <i>badan</i> (body/agency) (123) | 123 | 0.63 |
| jokowi* (123) | 123 | 0.62 |

| Government Assistance | Frequency | Frequency/tokens |
|---|-----------|------------------|
| <i>anggaran</i> (budget) (121) | 121 | 0.61 |
| <i>inovasi</i> (innovation) (120) | 120 | 0.60 |
| <i>kemenhub</i> (Ministry of Transportation) (118) | 118 | 0.59 |
| <i>lembaga</i> (institution) (116) | 116 | 0.59 |
| <i>lingkungan</i> (environment) (116) | 116 | 0.59 |
| umkm (MSME) (115) | 115 | 0.57 |
| <i>infrastruktur</i> (infrastructure) (112) | 112 | 0.57 |
| <i>pelayanan</i> (service/provision) (112) | 112 | 0.56 |
| <i>republik</i> (republic) (109) | 109 | 0.49 |
| <i>pariwisata</i> (tourism) (96) | 96 | 0.48 |
| <i>layanan</i> (service) (94) | 94 | 0.47 |
| <i>internasional</i> (international) (92) | 92 | 0.43 |
| <i>wisata</i> (tour) (85) | 85 | 0.43 |
| <i>pemerintahan</i> (government/administration) (85) | 85 | 0.41 |
| bank (81) | 81 | 0.37 |
| sdm (human resource) (73) | 73 | 0.36 |
| <i>organisasi</i> (organisation) (71) | 71 | 0.34 |
| <i>korupsi</i> (corruption) (66) | 66 | 0.34 |
| <i>pers</i> (press) (66) | 66 | 0.33 |
| <i>birokrasi</i> (bureaucracy) (65) | 65 | 0.33 |
| <i>ekspor</i> (export) (64) | 64 | 0.32 |
| <i>polri</i> (Indonesian National Police) (62) | 62 | 0.26 |
| <i>keamanan</i> (security) (51) | 51 | 0.26 |
| <i>kemerdekaan</i> (independence) (51) | 51 | 0.26 |
| media (51) | 51 | 0.26 |
| <i>pilkada</i> (regional election) (51) | 51 | 0.26 |
| <i>menkopolhukam</i> (Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal and Security Affairs) (51) | 51 | 0.26 |
| <i>penghubungindonesia</i> (Indonesian liaison) (51) | 51 | 0.26 |
| <i>perlindungan</i> (protection) (51) | 51 | 0.26 |
| <i>kuasa</i> (power/authority) (50) | 50 | 0.61 |
| <i>bantuan</i> (assistance) (120) | 120 | 0.41 |
| <i>membuat</i> (make) (81) | 81 | 2.80 |

Source: Compiled by the authors.

**Jokowi*: Jokowi, the president of the Republic of Indonesia, Joko Widodo, is commonly called Jokowi

Public health

Public health is a theme that describes the efforts made by the government in assuming its role to maintain and protect the health of its people. The main focus of public health is an effort to enhance human resources.

In connection with Covid-19, the government was forced to carry out various efforts for the sake of public health, and in this respect we found the occurrence of the words *pandemi* (pandemic), *kesehatan* (health), *virus* and *corona*. The word *protokol* (protocol) describes the governmental regulations made to manage security during the pandemic. The word *keselamatan* (safety) illustrates the government's priority to reduce the number of Covid-19 victims. This description is also used to explain the words *vaksin* (vaccine), *korban* (victim), *vaksinasi* (vaccination), *pencegahan* (prevention) and *pasien* (patient). Vaccine and health protocol are two things that complement each other as forms of resilience and self-protection.

Table 8: Frequent words under the Public Health theme

| Public Health | Frequency | Frequency/tokens |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|------------------|
| Covid (943) | 943 | 5.00 |
| <i>bisa</i> (can) (806) | 806 | 4.00 |
| <i>pandemi</i> (pandemic) (642) | 642 | 3.00 |
| <i>kesehatan</i> (health) (626) | 626 | 3.00 |
| <i>selamat</i> (safe) (401) | 401 | 2.00 |
| <i>protokol</i> (protocol) (316) | 316 | 2.00 |
| <i>sehat</i> (healthy) (156) | 156 | 0.80 |
| <i>keselamatan</i> (safety) (110) | 110 | 0.60 |
| <i>ibu</i> (mother) (110) | 110 | 0.60 |
| <i>masker</i> (face mask) (109) | 109 | 0.60 |
| <i>udara</i> (air) (107) | 107 | 0.50 |
| <i>informasi</i> (information) (106) | 106 | 0.50 |
| <i>fasilitas</i> (facility) (92) | 92 | 0.50 |
| <i>vaksin</i> (vaccine) (88) | 88 | 0.40 |
| <i>publik</i> (public) (88) | 88 | 0.40 |
| <i>korban</i> (victim) (80) | 80 | 0.40 |
| <i>vaksinasi</i> (vaccination) (75) | 75 | 0.40 |
| <i>virus</i> (71) | 71 | 0.40 |
| <i>pencegahan</i> (prevention) (62) | 62 | 0.30 |
| <i>pasien</i> (patient) (55) | 55 | 0.30 |
| <i>corona</i> (55) | 55 | 0.30 |
| <i>ketahanan</i> (resilience) (54) | 54 | 0.30 |

Source: Compiled by the authors.

Based on the frequent word analysis, we found the themes of government assistance and public health. This is part of *self-promotion*, a self-presentational strategy which focuses on attributes of competence rather than likeability (Goffman, 1956). In this case, public officials attempted to build positivity and trust in order to reduce panic about public health and welfare (Goffman, 1956). These public officials tried to step forward to give the impression that they are credible officials capable of leading the Indonesian people through this challenging situation. This research found that, unlike the strategies implemented by business organisations undergoing a crisis and that publish information about the negative effects on their business, disruptions to their services and about their organisation's struggle to survive, public organisations try to show their credibility and their ability to overcome the Covid-19 pandemic and its impacts (Patelli and Pedrini, 2014; Benthous, Risius and Beck, 2016; Yang and Liu, 2017; Carnevale and Gangloff, 2022). This study also confirmed similar strategies applied by companies during the Covid-19 pandemic (Im, Kim and Miao, 2021; Ou, Wong and Huang, 2021; Nosrati and Detlor, 2022).

Keyword list

This section presents the keyword list analysis to find significant differences in each corpus. To do so, we made two corpora. The first constitutes a particular public official while the second constitutes a collection of corpora from all the other public officials in the study. As an example, to analyse the keyword list of Budi Karya, the first corpus refers to that of Budi Karya while the six remaining public officials were combined to form the second collection of corpora. We sorted them based on the number of words that had the most significant differences. The following tables showcase frequency, keyness, effect and keywords.

We found that Budi Karya and Yasin Limpo, after making claims denying the Covid-19 pandemic or showing mishandling of the Covid-19 pandemic, tried to promote the impression that they work hard on the sector they are leading. Budi Karya is the Minister of Transportation and the statements he made were mostly relevant to his sector. Accordingly, words like *lingkungan* (environment), *moda* (mode), *sistem* (system), *kendaraan* (vehicle), *proyek* (project), *air* (water), bus, *penerbangan* (flight) and *terminal* were found more frequently than others. In line with this finding, Yasin Limpo (Minister of Agriculture) similarly made every effort to convey the impression that they were successfully conducting activities in the agricultural sector. Accordingly, we found the words *bulog* (bureau of logistics), *holtikultura* (horticulture), *daging* (meat), *varietas* (variety), *ternak* (livestock), *budidaya* (cultivation), *kedelai* (soybean), *produktivitas* (productivity), *padi* (paddy) and *pasar* (market) in his corpus text.

Meanwhile, given their wider scope of duties, Edi as a Governor and Ma'ruf Amin as a Vice President, used several approaches as part of their impression management strategies. The word *olahraga* (sports) in Edi's corpus indicates a call to engage in sports as a way to combat Covid-19. Subsequently, the words *amanah* (trust), *silaturahmi* (bond of friendship) and *masjid* (mosque) reflected an effort to establish Edi's image as a religious

figure. Such efforts were also observed in Ma’ruf Amin’s corpus, where we found the word *wakaf* (endowment) as a strategy to overcome the Covid-19 pandemic by endowing one’s right to an object to others in greater need. We also found the words bank, dna and *mikro* (micro) in Ma’ruf Amin’s corpus text, which significantly differ with the other’s corpus texts, indicating that he focused on economic policy to maintain national stability. Ma’ruf presents these two aspects as constituting the most reliable strategy to survive the Covid-19 pandemic. The word global indicates that the Covid-19 pandemic is a global disaster, which may indicate some form of distancing from the problem, by stating that what is currently happening is also being experienced by communities and governments all over the world.

Table 9: Keyword list of Budi Karya’s corpus

| Frequency | Keyness | Effect | Keyword |
|-----------|---------|--------|--|
| 50 | + | 20.18 | 0.0021 <i>lingkungan</i> (environment) |
| 51 | + | 145.3 | 0.0022 <i>moda</i> (mode) |
| 57 | + | 20.91 | 0.0024 <i>sistem</i> (system) |
| 56 | + | 82.95 | 0.0024 <i>kendaraan</i> (vehicle) |
| 58 | + | 61.33 | 0.0025 <i>proyek</i> (project) |
| 58 | + | 35.53 | 0.0025 <i>air</i> (water) |
| 62 | + | 127.61 | 0.0026 bus |
| 65 | + | 61.12 | 0.0027 <i>keselamatan</i> (safety) |
| 63 | + | 151.39 | 0.0027 <i>penerbangan</i> (flight) |
| 68 | + | 143.15 | 0.0029 terminal |

Source: Compiled by the author.

Table 10: Keyword list of Edy’s corpus

| Frequency | Keyness | Effect | Keyword |
|-----------|---------|--------|--|
| 50 | + | 26 | 0.0016 <i>olahraga</i> (sports) |
| 56 | + | 51.73 | 0.0018 <i>amanah</i> (trust) |
| 59 | + | 81.17 | 0.0019 <i>silaturahmi</i> (bond of friendship) |
| 59 | + | 27.37 | 0.0019 <i>kerjasama</i> (collaboration) |
| 61 | + | 47.07 | 0.002 <i>lancar</i> (smooth) |
| 65 | + | 34.61 | 0.0021 <i>masjid</i> (mosque) |
| 64 | + | 116.11 | 0.0021 <i>amin</i> (amen) |
| 76 | + | 20.17 | 0.0025 tni (Indonesian national armed forces) |
| 81 | + | 27.41 | 0.0026 <i>rakyat</i> (the people) |
| 87 | + | 46.91 | 0.0028 <i>desa</i> (village) |

Source: Compiled by the authors.

Table 11: Keyword list of Maaruf Amin's corpus

| Frequency | | Keyness | Effect | Keyword |
|-----------|---|---------|--------|---------------------------------------|
| 50 | + | 47.68 | 0.002 | bank |
| 54 | + | 20.67 | 0.0021 | <i>bantuan</i> (assistance) |
| 52 | + | 48.51 | 0.0021 | normal |
| 57 | + | 101.03 | 0.0023 | <i>istana</i> ([presidential] palace) |
| 57 | + | 101.03 | 0.0023 | <i>mikro</i> (micro) |
| 61 | + | 40.55 | 0.0024 | <i>Jokowi</i> * |
| 60 | + | 111.36 | 0.0024 | <i>wakaf</i> (endowment) |
| 60 | + | 69.4 | 0.0024 | digital |
| 66 | + | 46.09 | 0.0026 | <i>inovasi</i> (innovation) |
| 72 | + | 97.48 | 0.0028 | global |

**Jokowi*: Jokowi Widodo, the president of the Republic of Indonesia, Joko Widodo, is commonly called Jokowi

Source: Compiled by the authors.

Table 12: Keyword list of Luhut's corpus

| Frequency | | Keyness | Effect | Keyword |
|-----------|---|---------|--------|---------------------------|
| 53 | + | 47.06 | 0.0073 | <i>sehingga</i> (so that) |
| 86 | + | 55.03 | 0.0117 | <i>karena</i> (because) |
| 93 | + | 19.01 | 0.0124 | <i>bisa</i> (can) |
| 110 | + | 26.35 | 0.0145 | <i>akan</i> (will) |
| 208 | + | 101.66 | 0.0267 | Indonesia |
| 461 | + | 194.48 | 0.0529 | <i>saya</i> (I) |

Source: Compiled by the authors.

Table 13: Keyword list of Mahfud MD's corpus

| Frequency | | Keyness | Effect | Keyword |
|-----------|---|---------|--------|---|
| 10 | + | 57.82 | 0.0026 | <i>kemenko</i> (Coordination Ministry) |
| 12 | + | 54.91 | 0.0031 | <i>becak</i> (pedicab) |
| 13 | + | 32.28 | 0.0033 | <i>sholat</i> (salat prayers) |
| 13 | + | 25.3 | 0.0033 | <i>hukum</i> (law) |
| 13 | + | 22.96 | 0.0033 | <i>santri</i> (Islamic boarding school student) |
| 16 | + | 23.12 | 0.004 | video |
| 18 | + | 92.34 | 0.0046 | <i>mendagri</i> (Minister of Home Affairs) |
| 20 | + | 25.72 | 0.005 | <i>masing</i> (each) |
| 22 | + | 141.81 | 0.0056 | Madura |
| 26 | + | 97.63 | 0.0066 | <i>pilkada</i> (regional election) |

Source: Compiled by the authors.

Table 14: Keyword list of Ridho Yahya's corpus

| Frequency | Keyness | Effect | Keyword |
|-----------|---------|--------|--|
| 10 | + | 26.09 | 0.0048 <i>musibah</i> (disaster) |
| 14 | + | 108.37 | 0.0068 <i>almh</i> (the deceased) |
| 16 | + | 81.55 | 0.0078 <i>innalillahi</i> ("we belong to Allah") |
| 19 | + | 126.01 | 0.0092 <i>aamiin</i> (amen) |
| 20 | + | 85.98 | 0.0096 <i>berduka</i> (to mourn) |
| 21 | + | 109.51 | 0.0102 <i>wafatnya</i> (the death) |
| 23 | + | 55.47 | 0.0108 <i>turut</i> (take part) |
| 26 | + | 25.57 | 0.0116 Allah |
| 27 | + | 138.12 | 0.013 <i>husnul</i> (good) |
| 27 | + | 136.72 | 0.013 <i>ketabahan</i> (fortitude) |

Source: Compiled by the authors.

Table 15: Keyword list of Yasin Limpo's corpus

| Frequency | Keyness | Effect | Keyword |
|-----------|---------|--------|---|
| 10 | + | 58.32 | 0.0019 <i>bulog</i> (bureau of logistics) |
| 10 | + | 58.32 | 0.0019 <i>holtikultura</i> (horticulture) |
| 10 | + | 37.82 | 0.0019 <i>daging</i> (meat) |
| 12 | + | 63.05 | 0.0023 <i>varietas</i> (variety) |
| 12 | + | 55.31 | 0.0023 <i>ternak</i> (livestock) |
| 13 | + | 75.83 | 0.0024 <i>budidaya</i> (cultivation) |
| 13 | + | 75.83 | 0.0024 <i>kedelai</i> (soybean) |
| 16 | + | 56.42 | 0.003 <i>produktivitas</i> (productivity) |
| 17 | + | 82.59 | 0.0032 <i>padi</i> (paddy) |
| 18 | + | 28.24 | 0.0034 <i>pasar</i> (market) |

Source: Compiled by the authors.

Luhut and Mahfud MD are Coordinating Ministers who oversee technical ministries. The use of the word *saya* (I/me) is a form of egotism indicating individual efforts in handling the Covid-19 pandemic. The word *bisa* (can) is part of creating the impression that the Indonesian people can overcome this disaster by showing optimism. The words *sholat* (salat prayers) and *santri* (Islamic boarding school students) found in Mahfud MD's corpus suggest efforts to establish the impression of a religious leader who is part of *santri* (those who pursue Islamic education in *pesantren* – Islamic boarding schools) and a member of Nahdatul Ulama. The words *hukum* (law) and *pilkada* (regional election) constitute two areas that are under his jurisdiction.

Based on Ridho Yahya's corpus text, we found that as a mayor, Ridho Yahya conveyed numerous condolences, which was a sort of final contribution he was able to do during the Covid-19 pandemic. The words we found included *almh* (*almarhum/ah* – the

deceased), *berduka* (to mourn), *wafatnya* (the death) and *husnul* (good). The words *musibah* (disaster) and *ketabahan* (fortitude) give the impression that this pandemic is a disaster and that people need to muster fortitude to survive. This impression also suggests that the pandemic is beyond his control. Furthermore, Ridho Yahya also established an impression as a religious leader.

We also found that public officials manage their impressions by not responding to criticisms relating to statements of Covid-19 pandemic denials or erroneous policies. Instead of discussing the two matters, most of them promoted the good work they had done by working as best as they could in their respective scopes of authority, such as the economy and public health. Specifically, the Minister of Transportation and the Minister of Agriculture showed efforts referring to these categories. The impression they wanted to establish is that they are public officials who are committed and dedicated leaders (Im, Kim and Miao, 2021; Tung, Tse and Chan, 2021; Nosrati and Detlor, 2022).

Responses by calling for collaborations, government interventions and their presence in addressing issues of public health are forms of symbolic approach applied by public officials (Hart, 1993) as reflected in their posts on social media. This is an effort to regain the public's trust and provide a lens to decipher the strategies used by public officials in handling the Covid-19 pandemic. The current study, similar to studies on business organisations, found that public officials aggressively employed impression management strategy to showcase themselves as credible and responsible officials (Im, Kim and Miao, 2021; Tung, Tse and Chan, 2021; Nosrati and Detlor, 2022). The impression management strategy public officials applied has some similarities to business organisations, which significantly show positive attributes.

Conclusion

Theoretical contributions

The present study posits that public officials who have made erroneous claims or implemented inaccurate policies in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic have collectively shaped public perception through impression management. This interactive process allowed officials to adjust their communication strategies in response to occurrences such as problematic policies. Our analysis of the Instagram accounts of public officials in Indonesia revealed the use of various impression management strategies, including ingratiation, self-promotion and supplication.

While the impression management theory was introduced by Goffman in 1956, our study offers a novel contribution by applying this theory specifically to crisis communication carried out by public officials in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. Furthermore, our use of corpus linguistics techniques, including frequent words and keyword lists, distinguishes our study from prior research that has primarily employed social media content analysis. Our method is valuable as it can inductively demonstrate how specific word choices are used to manage social media account impressions in order to shape public perceptions.

Overall, our findings confirm the use of common impression management strategies, namely ingratiation, self-promotion and supplication. However, our analysis reveals that ingratiation in this context differs from prior studies conducted in Western contexts, where characteristics such as humour, warmth, reliability and attention were developed. In the case of public officials in Indonesia, our study found that they tend to emphasise their religious affiliation to shape their public image.

Furthermore, our study also confirms that self-promotion was used by public officials to project themselves as credible individuals who are responsible for the tasks within their purview. Additionally, supplication was observed through themes of hope and optimism, where public officials made future-oriented statements regarding unresolved issues, and collaborative action, which stressed the need for joint efforts to tackle pandemic-related challenges.

Practical contributions

The present study reveals that all public officials, including those analysed in this study, tend to focus exclusively on positive aspects while avoiding any negative themes related to the erroneous claims or policies they made. While this strategy may result in a positive image, it is not without risk, as some members of the public may expect an apology for officials' mistakes at the onset of the pandemic. Failing to address this issue could undermine the reputation they have worked to establish. Conversely, a careful presentation of the negative risks associated with their job may foster public understanding and acceptance of the complex and challenging circumstances that officials faced.

In addition, our study found that these public officials generally neglected the use of scientific methods in decision-making, which would have bolstered their credibility and trustworthiness as public officials. Their disregard for science created confusion and contributed to further erosion of public trust. In light of these findings, a scientific approach to impression management in a crisis situation could improve the public's perception of their capabilities. Interestingly, our analysis found that public officials in Indonesia tended to emphasise their religious affiliation as a means of shaping their public image, perhaps reflecting the cultural context of the country.

Research limitation and future direction

This study has a number of limitations. First, this study did not make a quantitative or a qualitative examination of the impact that public officials' impression management has on the public to mitigate erroneous claims and policies. Thus, this research could not ascertain whether a particular type of strategy can successfully rebuild public trust. In this regard, future studies could, for instance, examine the effect that certain types of impression management strategy have on public trust. Additionally, conducting a sentiment analysis on comments found on Instagram and calculating the number of comments as well as likes could also serve as a proxy indicator to measure this.

The next limitation refers to the manual coding that relied on the subjective interpretation of the coder. We tried to use the strategy of three round coding for the sake of intersubjectivity. Future research can employ quantitative analysis to measure the reliability of codes occurring in the research. This is essential so that the research results become more objective. Another drawback to the study was the limited number of public officials' social media accounts (i.e. seven officials), and that the study was only conducted in one country. Future studies should analyse similar strategies by comparing them in different contexts to develop the theory of impression management.

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