

Trump's Twitter Propaganda During Covid-19

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Abstract

During the early Covid-19 pandemic, led by controversial presidential figure Donald Trump, the US seemed to be overwhelmed by this microbial creature, proving to be one of the countries with the most Covid-19. Besides health impacts, there are many multi-effects afterward, such as economic, social, political, and so on, that must be faced after this Covid-19 outbreak. Moreover, the US will hold a presidential election in November 2020. This challenge makes Trump must focus on how to complete Covid-19 while maintaining electability as President. One of the methods adopted is by forming narration through Twitter. Donald Trump is an active Twitter user who often tweets about his stance. Therefore, this study wants to analyze Trump's Twitter tweet content based on propaganda based on six propaganda classifications based on Holly Thayer's Theory. The quantitative content analysis method is the systematic and replicable examination of symbols of communication. The object of research in this article is Twitter's @realDonaldTrump tweet. We analyzed Donald Trump's Twitter content in the period 1 March 2020-27 May 2020 with a systematic random sample method. Our result shows that Trump constructs a message to support his policy and maintain his electability.

Keywords: Covid-19, Twitter, Donald Trump, Propaganda, Constructs a Message.

Introduction

Many parties, including political officials, have used social media as a communication and information platform. Its power to connect with others and be up-to-date with the latest news is the main attraction of social media. Yet, the internet and social media are proving to be particularly fertile soil for fake news (van der Linden et al., 2020). The development of technology, the internet, and social media accelerates fake news to a higher level (Muqsith & Pratomo, 2021). This is one of the negative impacts of technological developments, especially social media.

Many studies show how social media has become a place to spread hoaxes and propaganda. For example, in the aftermath of the 2016 US presidential election, it was alleged that fake news might have been pivotal in the election of President Trump (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017). Departing from the 2016 Presidential election phenomenon, Hughes & Waismel-Manor (2021) traced the source of the hoax news to Veles, Macedonia, where they interviewed Ceselkoski, the man who led Donald Trump to the presidency in 2016. When looking at the perspective of democracy, fake news indicates deeper concerns about the democratization of public expression made possible first through digital media generally and then social media particularly (Carlson, 2020). Worryingly, these media

practices are not just a feature of autocratic regimes but an emerging characteristic in democracies as well (Mejias & Vokuev, 2017).

Apart from the 2016 US Presidential election, when the conflict broke out between Russia and Ukraine, social media has been used as a propaganda tool. Research from Boyte (2017) reveals how social media and propaganda elements, called narratives, were used during the information war period in Ukraine during 2013-2015. Technological advances allow government and non-government actors to use social media to manipulate perceptions for particular interests. In addition, when Russia carried out propaganda through the Channel One television channel, the Ukrainian public responded to Russian Propaganda on Twitter. Fake news invites iconic and emotional comments. The strongest emotions for comments expressing distrust were sarcasm (44.5 %) and disgust (38.7%), often targeted at Propaganda on Channel One in general or the specific content of a news story (Khaldarova & Pantti, 2016).

The United Kingdom also experienced a similar case, where the Brexit phenomenon sparked a debate about the massive role of fake news in smoothing the decision to leave the European Union. Bastos & Mercea (2019) reveal the role of botnets or bots on Twitter in the Brexit campaign. Bots distribute vast amounts of false information in various languages and target individual citizens for aggressive operations (Aro, 2016); in the UK context, they retweeted massively. In addition, Höller (2021) even finds that the role of key opinion leaders such as David Cameron, Jeremy Corbyn, Boris Johnson, and Nigel Farage is quite significant. One of the results of his research is that two prominent political figures in the UK, Boris Johnson, and Nigel Farage, used Twitter to spread misleading information on Brexit.

This shows that social media is a fertile place for political Propaganda. The spread of fake news is done with the help of technology, but there is also a role for political figures. Propaganda is carried out when there are specific political goals to be achieved. It is not only happened during the Brexit, Ukraine, or US presidential election, but when the Covid-19 pandemic hit, some political officials carried out Propaganda to maintain their electability. This happened in the late period of Donald Trump, wherein in 2020, Covid-19 coincided with his political year.

When the pandemic hit the world, almost all countries were struggling with the impact of this pandemic, which attacks many sectors: economic, social, and political. So far, we know very little about this virus: origins from the Huanan seafood market, possible primary sources are from the bat (Shereen et al., 2020), spread through human-to-human transmission.

During the early period of the pandemic, the United States was the country with the most Covid-19 cases. Dated April 25, 2020, US deaths exceed 50.000 thousand, according to John Hopkins University, and have 870.000 positive cases (BBC, 2020). This figure makes the President of the United States considered bad by the public. Moreover, Donald Trump is undergoing a campaign period so that he is re-elected as US President. However, the impact of Covid-19 such as school closure, unemployment, the cessation of economic activity made some Trump supporters worried that he would not be re-elected. Dan Eberhart, a Republican donor, said: *"The economic ramifications of the coronavirus are increasingly likely to weigh heavily on Trump's re-election chances and quite possibly could cost him re-election"* (Bennet, 2020).

This challenge makes Trump must focus on how to solve this Covid-19 while trying to maintain electability as President. One of the methods adopted is by forming narration

through social media, Twitter. During early pandemic in the USA, Donald Trump has tweeted about more than 50 to offer a positive assessment of the growing health crisis--using language such as “*work well, ‘That the epidemic spread’ very slowly in the US*” and “*very controlled*”--even when the death rate the number of cases increased (Muller, 2020).

One of the narratives echoed by Trump is to blame China as the mastermind behind Covid-19. In some chances, Trump discredited China about Covid-19 in the mass media. In March, the US President named this coronavirus “*Chinese virus.*” “*Cause it comes from China. It's not racist at all, no, not at all. It comes from China; that's why. I want it to be accurate*” (Vazquez & Klein, 2020). This claim certainly does not have an incorrect justification and has an indication that China has brought this virus into the global realm. This phenomenon is interesting, especially in the critical period of Donald Trump in dealing with Covid-19 in the middle of his campaign. In this context, this article aims to analyze the Propaganda carried out by Trump during the early Covid-19 pandemic via Twitter. During these periods, when US suffer from pandemic, Trump begin to shifting all the blame of US Covid-19 cases to external actor such as China and WHO. For example, speaking at a press conference on 7 April, President Trump criticized WHO for its decisions on covid-19 and said that the US could put a ‘very powerful’ freeze on funding for the organization (Mahase, 2020). He had a quasi-belief that Covid-19 will just dissipate on its own, and that it is comparable to, if not milder, than the flu. ‘It’s going to disappear (Lasco, 2020). This study is significant to know how Trump used Covid-19 as a tool to maintain his electability. As far as our knowledge, this is the first research that examines Trump’s Propaganda during Covid-19.

Propaganda and fake news have interesting relationships. By definition, propaganda does have many meanings. Lasswell, in *Propaganda Political Theory*, explains that propaganda is the management of collective attitudes by the manipulation of significant symbols (Lasswell, 1927). The key here is how an actor manages the collective attitude of society. Propaganda practices are often encountered. This is because Propaganda is a mass phenomenon; it must circulate in public, reaching and drawing together large numbers of individuals who are mostly unknown to one another (Auerbach & Russ, n.d.).

Propaganda itself is included in a fake news typology. Fake news is just a newer name than lies. Since the dawn of language, humans have used lies for many purposes: blaming, persuading, winning arguments, exerting dominance (Donald A. Barclay, 2018). Tandoc Jr., Lim, & Ling (2017) explain that propaganda is news created by political entities to influence others. Similar to advertising, propaganda provides a biased perspective, but its purpose is more influential than informing.

Understanding from Benkler, Faris, & Roberts (2018) can provide the exact contextualization of propaganda as hoaxes. They define Propaganda as: “*communication is designed to manipulate a target population by affecting its beliefs, attitudes, or preferences to obtain behavior compliant with the political goals of the propagandist.*” (Benkler et al., 2018). A similar sentiment was expressed by Auerbach & Costranovo (2013), but their approach was more pragmatic: publicly disseminated information that serves to influence others in belief and/or action.

The keyword lies in how propaganda is able to manipulate people's attitudes according to what they want. In other words, there is an agenda to be achieved by the communicator. About the agenda, Lasswell explained that each object had a different

purpose. Some propagandas exist to organize an attitude toward a person, a group, a policy or institution, and a mode of personal participation (Lasswell, 1927).

There are three critical elements of propaganda: (a) an actor with intent to manage; (b) target population's attitudes or behaviors; and (c) through symbolic manipulation informed by a psychological model of belief or attitude formation and revision, as opposed to a rational or deliberative approach (Benkler et al., 2018). As a cultural practice, Propaganda is more concerned about how human beings communicate, especially for the creation and widespread dissemination of attitudes, images, and beliefs (Auerbach & Russ, n.d.).

There are seven common propaganda techniques: name-calling, which uses derogatory or negative labels to reduce the credibility of one actor. Testimonials are a technique that uses powerful people statements to increase credibility. Bandwagon uses pressure on an individual to follow the majority. Card-stacking is telling the most information but not including some information. Glittering Generalities uses the most common positive words that everyone would and certainly agree upon. The plain folk technique relates a prominent person's idea to one's condition. Lastly, the transfer technique tries to link authority into the subject they want to propagate.

Then, other research results reveal this general propaganda technique. Holly Thayer spawned this hypothesis in her thesis, *"21st Century Propaganda: The Age of Twitter."* There are six other techniques based on research (Thayer, 2018). *First* is a call to action is classified by containing action words, such as 'watching,' 'getting ready,' or 'alert,' where the message is urging the reader to take action. *Second*, questioning a proposed or accepted argument that is submitted or accepted is identified by the author, who reminds certain arguments and then refutes them in several ways, suggests errors in them, or openly disagrees with them. *Third*, questioning an authority figure or an authoritative power is identified by calling certain people or institutions and then denying them or using language or presenting evidence. *Fourth*, evidence was given, or a proposed argument is categorized as evidence if pictures, videos, or links are attached, and if statistics or information are provided in the message body that proposes or supports certain arguments. *Fifth*, a call to a person is identified when the tweet text includes someone's Twitter handle with authority, as discussed earlier with the transfer technique, or if a specific hashtag associated with someone (#MAGA) is used. *Sixth*, a placement to blame is identified when the text indicates that a problem or event results from a particular person, organization, institution, or political party.

Methods

This article uses the quantitative content analysis method to review nuanced propaganda content. Quantitative content analysis can be used as a tool to analyze relationships between variables using statistical methods to describe the communication meaning and its context, both of production and consumption (Riffe et al., 2014). Holsti in (Muqisith, 2019) put forward three main functions of content analysis, namely: describe the characteristics of communication by asking what, how, and to whom the message is delivered; make conclusions, such as antecedents of communication, by asking questions about why the message was delivered, and the consequences of communication by proposing what the effect of the message is.

The object of research in this article is Twitter's @realDonaldTrump tweet. Donald Trump is an active user and can take advantage of Twitter as political communication and

propaganda tool. Why Twitter no other Sosial Media? Twitter is a free platform, and candidates, therefore, face no resource limitations when using it; this makes Twitter a wellspring of information about campaign messaging, given a level playing field (Gross & Johnson, 2016). During the presidential election in 2016, Francia (2018) found that Trump did receive more free news coverage than Clinton as measured by free media value and media mentions, he had more Twitter followers, and more people reported seeing posts about Trump on social media and in the news (Francia, 2018).

We analyzed Donald Trump's Twitter content from 1 March 2020-27 May 2020 with a systematic random sample method. We chose March until May because it was during an early pandemic, where US cases were ballooned, Trump begin propaganda to make a blame shifting to other actors such as China and WHO. In the period, Trump is downplaying the virus, considering that he will run for re-election. We succeeded in capturing 69 Twitter tweets from Trump with a propaganda tone, which we then coded with MS-excel. We made this tweet in multiples of four. The population in this study is Twitter that Trump between that time period raised.

Results

The results of the study show that the propaganda that Trump often uses is related to the Covid-19 policy (35 tweets). From this category, Trump is trying to justify that he did what had to be done and increase his credibility as US President. Moreover, this year is a crucial period where it will determine whether Trump will have a chance to advance to the next round or not. Moreover, Trump's plans to win the next election must be modified because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Thus, Trump's propaganda was aimed at increasing his chances of winning in the next Presidential election. And, showing the success of the Covid-19 policy on social media is considered to be one way that can be taken.

Trump called for Covid-19 cases to fall; then, the US has conducted many tests to check the public. Trump also pointed out that the testing method was the best and made a statement that the vaccine had been developed and could be used by the end of the year. This propaganda shows that Trump can overcome Covid-19 cases in his country by providing statistics and good news about handling Covid-19.

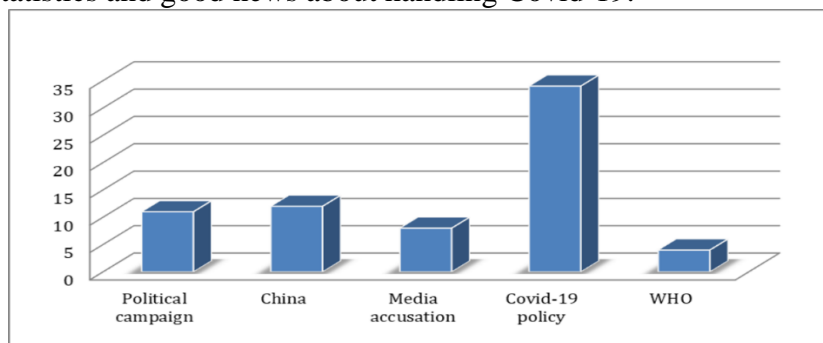


Figure 1. Trump’s Propaganda Topic (source: authors research)

The next topic relates to China with 12 tweets. In the beginning, Donald Trump much appreciated how China acted in handling this Covid-19. On January 24, Trump said in the media that he appreciated China's efforts. *"China has been working very hard to contain the Coronavirus,"* Trump wrote in a post on Twitter. *"The United States greatly appreciates their efforts and transparency. It will all work out well. In particular, on behalf of the American People, I want to thank President Xi!"* (Higgins, 2020). There is a

kind and very appreciative attitude from Donald Trump towards Xi Jinping for working hard to stem this coronavirus.

On January 27, 2020, Trump tweeted on Twitter and offered to send US experts to be sent to China. *"We are in very close communication with China concerning the virus,"* adding, *"We have offered China and President Xi (Jinping) any necessary help. Our experts are extraordinary!"* (Besheer, 2020). The development of this attitude shows that between the US and China, good cooperation was established to stop the pace of virus development.

However, some developments have at least changed Trump's attitude. Dated March 3, there were more than 90.000 confirmed cases and more than 2946 deaths. Because this case continues to grow every day and causes significant casualties, the WHO, on March 11, 2020, declared Covid-19 as a global pandemic. In response to the global pandemic, many countries spawned a lockdown policy (stopped all activities) plus an incentive to save their country from this pandemic. As a result of this phenomenon, there was a sharp change in attitude from Donald Trump. He began to blame China for the trouble. The reason is that China lacks transparency in the case of this pandemic. Thus, this pandemic got out of control and attacked all countries without exception. On several occasions, he replaced the diction of the covid-19 virus with the title *"Chinese virus"* because the virus originated in China.

Zhao Lijian, a spokesperson of China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, countered Trump's argument and said the US is the one who spread the virus to Wuhan. In his tweet, *"On January 24, President Trump tweeted the US greatly appreciates China's efforts & transparency. On March 13, President Trump said the data China shared are helpful for US efforts against the epidemic. The US should keep its own house in order rather than scapegoat China."*

The third topic is related to the Trump campaign. Trump's talk is pretty much discussing his political opponents, namely Joe Biden, who also ran for US President. Trump tried to bring down Joe Biden and his Democrat party by revealing the facts about the actions of his opponent, who is also the US Vice President for two periods together with Barack Obama. In addition to Joe Biden, Trump also attacks the Democrats by showing that they have no knowledge of the Covid-19 issue and are also always looking for problems in his administration. That is, the pandemic is an arena of persistence and information war between Donald Trump and Joe Biden and the Democratic party. The fight over the President's chair made Trump's policies highlighted by the opposition so that Trump also had to find ways to discredit and reduce their image. Moreover, Trump is at a disadvantage because he has to face Covid-19 and elections simultaneously.

The next interesting topic of the tweet is Trump's attack on the media. Trump criticized the mainstream US media such as CNN, Fox News, and the New York Times for providing false news about Trump's numbers and policies. The media, according to Trump, do not provide factual news and mislead the public. On the other hand, however, Trump's attack on the media also has an agenda to improve his self-image. By rejecting various news presented by the mainstream media, Trump shows his credibility in handling Covid-19. In a democracy, the media play an important role in bringing public opinion, so Trump must fight the narratives that are presented with the ridicule that discredit them.

Lastly is a matter of WHO topics. This topic is also important because it looks at Trump's attitudes and policies that question the ability of the WHO to solve this pandemic case. Indeed, quite some parties question the capabilities of WHO, but Trump goes further

than that. He accused him of being China-centric because it was seen from the collaboration carried out by China and WHO when the pandemic was still not rife. In fact, Trump strongly criticized WHO for not listening to Taiwan's warnings. Also, he questioned why it took the WHO so long to take decisive action.

Trump's criticism is indeed not far from China, even side by side. Trump views that WHO is not neutral and is more pro-China, so their neutrality is questioned. Trump also criticized their failure to assess the situation as a whole which had an impact on the increasingly massive spread of Covid-19. For all these reasons, Trump plans to freeze WHO funds, which the US is the largest donor in the organization. Trump also threatens to consider US 'membership' amidst this pandemic situation.

Trump's decision has been responded to by many actors. One of them is Bill Gates. Microsoft founder says in his Twitter that halting WHO funding is dangerous as it sounds. *"Their work is slowing the spread of Covid-19, and if that work is stopped, no other organization can replace them. The world needs @WHO now more than ever."* Samantha Power also responds to the President's decision by calling it an obscene decision. In her tweet, she said, *"... Everything Trump has criticized @WHO--trusting China's lies, flattering China, being late in sounding the #covid alarm--were the very mistakes Trump made & he's a hell of a lot more powerful."*

During the early pandemic, there was an increase in Trump's Twitter propaganda. In March 2020, Trump tweeted propaganda 17 times, including reciprocating someone else's. Then, during April 2020, there was an increase to 18 times the propaganda tweet carried out by Donald Trump. The most significant increase occurred in May, where there were 30 Donald Trump tweets containing his propaganda.

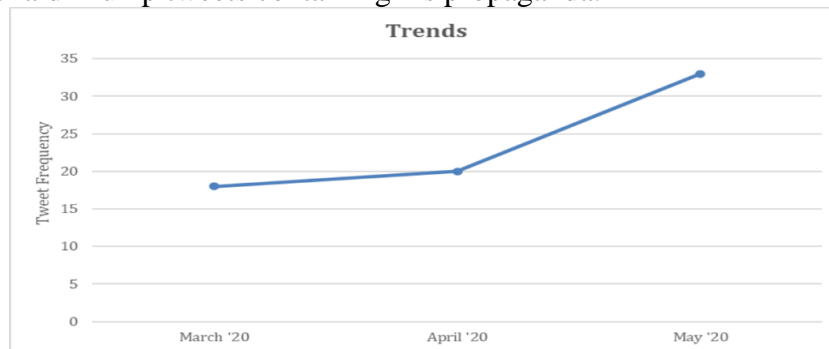


Figure 2. Trends consumed by Twitter users (source: authors research)

This trend shows that Twitter is a medium to propagate Trump's political agenda. Donald Trump himself has a follower of 80.5 million. This number is an advantage because, by means, many people will see the contents of the tweet. If averaged, every day, at least Donald Trump tweeted once. That is, Trump simply relies on Twitter as a medium for communication--in this research, propaganda.

Twitter itself is a microblogging social media. People can write their thoughts with the 'what's happening' feature. Also, individuals can retweet, in essence, resend someone's Twitter tweet into his tweet so that followers can see the tweet. Then, a reply feature can reply to someone's tweet, and other people can trace the reply.

From Donald Trump's tweet, not all propaganda techniques in general and the techniques proposed by Thayer, so we decided to combine all of these categories. As a result, the author has identified eight types of propaganda carried out by the President of the United States (US). This shows that Trump is actively using Twitter as a medium to

advance his political agenda. Twitter's broad reach and many followers helped it communicate its propaganda agenda to a large audience.

The eight categories are ranked from the most: evidence for justification (32%), name-calling (26%), card-stacking (16%), a placement to blame (9%), questioning arguments (7%), questioning authority (6%), testimonials (3%), and transfers (1%). The author will explain coherently. The most propaganda category carried out by Trump is evidence for justification (32%). This chat is intended to provide evidence that justifies that the policies that Trump has carried out are done properly. The following tweet is an example of this propaganda technique: "*Getting VERY good reviews of the Federal Government's job on CoronaVirus. Ventilators, building hospitals, beds, and yes, Testing, have been handled incredibly well. Testing is getting exponentially better every day. Love seeing our Country safely opening up!*"

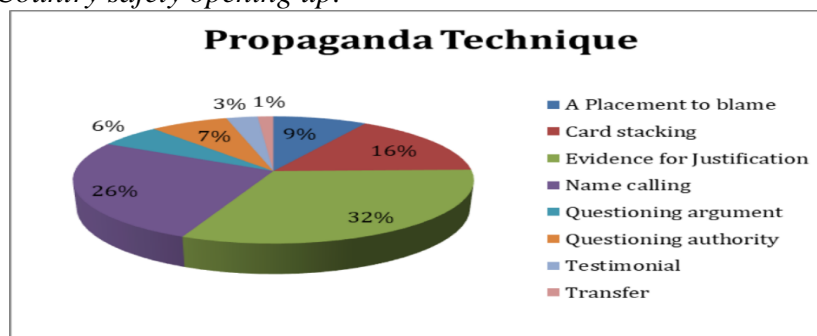


Figure 3. Propaganda technique (source: authors research)

In this passage, Trump intends to justify that his policy has received good assessments from several parties--even if it is not clearly stated those parties--However, this is a way of how Trump managed to overcome this Covid-19 by building a hospital, conducting a Covid-19 test as well. Thus, a good image is formed that Trump makes the right policies.

The second category is name-calling (26%). Name-calling is an attempt to discredit ideas or ideas, institutions, organizations, and individuals. Trump mostly does this to attack those who disagree with his ideas. Moreover, if it is associated with the current campaign period, it is not difficult to explain that name-calling is an effort to improve his self-image.

One of the following tweets is Trump's way of discrediting those who oppose him: "*The @nytimes story is a Fake, just like the "paper" itself. I was criticized for moving too fast when I issued the China Ban, long before most others wanted to do so. @SecAzar told me nothing until later, and Peter Navarro memo was same as Ban (see his statements). Fake News!*". In this regard, Trump immediately mentions the New York Times media as a lie for criticizing his policy in dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic.

Card stacking (16%) falls into the third-highest category. Trump chose positive facts that could make him successful in implementing Covid-19 policies. One piece of card-stacking nuances is as follows: "*Many testing sites are, and have been, open & available. Just passed five milli and justts, far more than any other country in the World. In fact, more than all other major countries combined! Don't believe the Fake News!*". This tweet is dated April 25, 2020.

If analyzed, the number of tests that passed five million is correct. In the covidtracking.org site made by The Atlantic, that number is true and exceeds other countries. However, further statements need further analysis. Based on

ourworldindata.org site, the number is still less than the combined Russia (2.72 million), Italy (1.71 million), (669.558 thousand), India (579.957 thousand), and Japan (147.454 thousand), which amount to 5.826.969 million.

Then, in the next place, there is a propaganda technique named a placement to blame (9%), where an actor places an error on someone else. In a few tweets, Trump places the blame on a phenomenon on other actors. Here is one example: *"As I have said for a long time, dealing with China is a very expensive thing to do. We just made a great Trade Deal, the ink was barely dry, and the World was hit by the Plague from China. 100 Trade Deals wouldn't make up the difference--and all those innocent lives lost!"* The first statement does not contain a problem. However, the next statement has an implied message. Trump puts this Covid-19 error on China; even 100 trade agreements won't be able to make it up. This mainly puts China as a scapegoat for the spread of Covid-19.

Next, propaganda technique with questioning authority (7%) intends to question the ability of an institution to solve a problem. In this case, Trump is not uncommon to criticize how the WHO works is inappropriate. *"Why did the W.H.O. Ignore an email from Taiwanese health officials in late December alerting them to the possibility that CoronaVirus could be transmitted between humans? Why did the W.H.O. make several claims about the CoronaVirus that are either inaccurate or misleading..."* This question questions WHO two questions; why ignore emails from WHO health officials, and why WHO made inaccurate claims. That is, Trump doubts the capability and capacity of this institution.

There is also a propaganda technique named a questioning argument (6%), where an individual or actor questions an argument that is raised or that has been accepted by a large audience. For example, in Trump's following tweet: *"If the fake news opposition Party is pushing, with all their might, the fact that President Trump ignored early warnings about the threat, then why did media & Dems viciously criticize me when I instituted a Travel Ban on China?"* They said *"early & not necessary;"* *"Corrupt Media!"* Trump questioned why many criticized the Ban on traveling to China, which was expressed by many media and opposition parties, democrats.

The next category is testimonials (3%). This category actually uses the statements of others as justification for Trump's success in tackling this Covid-19. One of them is Trump quoting senator Tom Cotton's statement: *"I want to commend the President for how he has handled the CoronaVirus situation, especially his early decision to shut down access into our Country from China, despite strong opposition to that decision."* @SenTomCotton: *"Thank You, Tom!"*. Trump cited his statement as a justification for his decision to close access to China.

The last category is the transfer technique (1%). This category is the least because Trump discloses more facts and attacks other parties. Trump almost never uses this technique. The only tweet is by quoting the co-founder of Home Depot company Bernie Marcus that the congress was too distracted by the impeachment case, when in fact they should be investigating this virus case.

Discussion

In the contextualization between propaganda and social media, it is very interesting to discuss the role of social media in terms of information dissemination again. Each party uses social media for various purposes. However, one thing that must be agreed upon is that social media is very effective for information dissemination and engagement with the

public. Social media are becoming an important intermediary for interaction between many actors, from government, individual, and business due to its openness, participation, and sharing (Khan et al., 2014). Moreover, in the social network, information spread occurs quickly that it can cause a real-world impact within minutes for millions of users (Figueira & Oliveira, 2017).

Previous research has shown that most of the messages posted on Twitter are truthful, but the service is also used to unintentionally spread misinformation and false rumors (Castillo et al., 2011). As a result, Twitter can be used to propagate certain points of view. For a terrorist, social media can be a platform for people with political cause and individual empowerment. Still, it also shows the dark side of social media to wage wars and conflict, which would pose a serious threat to national security and policy orders (Chatfield et al., 2015). The internet has enabled terrorists to widen their audience, conduct research, coordinate attacks, communicate with their network, and increase public awareness (Weimann, 2010).

For political purposes, Twitter can be used as propaganda to promote the value between two opponents. Makhortykh & Lyebyedyev (2015) found that in the hashtag #SaveDonbassPeople as a result of political conflict in Ukraine, Twitter is being used to bring the competing view to the surface. It's become a medium to be shown whose perspective is right or wrong. However, they both suggest that social media can become a tool to propagate certain points of view. They also believe that social media is vulnerable to this usage because it is convenient to produce, upload, and distribute fake news.

The writer suggests that Twitter can conduct certain political agendas to influence other behavior and gain electoral support. Furthermore, social media differ from broadcasting and newspapers in their interactive potential, which becomes a fundamental pillar in any discussion about political communication (Buccoliero et al., 2020). In the context of the pandemic, Twitter may represent a powerful tool for world leaders to communicate with citizens during public health crises (Rufai & Bunce, 2020) rapidly. With the tremendous speed of Twitter sharing and distributing information, it is very convenient to promote the political view of some actors. Furthermore, most people are looking for news from social media and powerful Twitter actors that can be trending topics to cover and consume.

During the period, Trump used evidence more often as his propaganda technique. This shows that Trump wants to show his success in overcoming the Covid-19 pandemic in his country. Moreover, in the campaign period, forming an image as a successful President in a time of crisis is crucial to increasing his chances of winning the Presidential election in 2020. This also correlates with the issue propagated by Trump. This Covid-19 policy issue dominates the propaganda narrative on Trump's social media. By showing his statistics and policies, Trump wants to lead the opinion and show that he has succeeded in containing Covid-19. He hopes this can increase his electability and also his chances of winning.

However, the name-calling technique is also used by Trump to discredit the opposing parties and disadvantage them politically. This is related to the Covid-19 policy in his era. Many say that Trump failed in dealing with Covid-19. Seeing this as an attack, Trump later propagated that the attacker had called him was wrong. He did not hesitate to say it publicly and mention the account's name. Donald Trump used this strategy on Twitter when he faced Hillary Clinton. He attacks Hillary to discredit or even bring her down. According to Ross & Caldwell (2020), this strategy is called "going negativity."

According to them, Trump successfully vilifies his opponent, judging her ethics and morality, capacity to lead, associates, and previous accomplishments. He increases the force of these evaluations through typography and grammar and employs rhetorical questions to close down the dialogic 'space' that his opponent could be a capable adversary (Ross & Caldwell, 2020)

Donald Trump, as a populist figure, also needs to be considered. Populist figures use social media as a funnel to communicate their ideas and a means of getting people's attention. In the case of Donald Trump, his ability to capture media attention has been honed over decades of business dealings, and it has been widely recognized that his propaganda skills and media savvy are responsible for his success (Wimberly, 2018). Pain & Chen's (2019) research which analyzed Donald Trump's tweets from May 4, 2009-January 2017, justified Wimberly's statement. Trump's tweets demonstrated quite conclusively how he perpetuates a populist message that is both aversive and uncivil and lacks any normative attributes of deliberation that one would expect in the leader of a mighty nation, such as the United States (Pain & Chen, 2019). When the United States faced a pandemic, Trump tried to communicate that he had successfully brought his country out of the pandemic.

Trump's attitude is reflected in the topics he raises. Most of his propaganda messages raised the theme of Covid-19 policy. Considering that Trump was garnering support to win the Presidential election, the Covid-19 policy could increase his electability. So, he wants to highlight the positive things he does, even though sometimes his policies go against the advice of experts. Donald Trump's continued aversion to council and expertise has greatly impacted the federal government's response to Covid-19 (Rutledge, 2020).

However, Carter & May (2020) argue that in the early weeks of a pandemic, the US Covid-19 response has been hindered by unclear goals, lack of political commitment, and dysfunctional institutional dynamics. In addition, according to Béland et al. (2021), Donald Trump wants to throw the blame on others when public health conditions worsen. Nevertheless, when things are going well, Donald Trump wants to take that credit and consider it a success of his administration. Therefore, Trump launched various narratives that his administration successfully tackled Covid-19.

Overall, the propaganda carried out by Trump is aimed at giving him a chance to win the Presidential election. Moreover, he wanted to highlight the success of economic development as his weapon. However, the Covid-19 pandemic, which ravaged the economies of many countries, made Trump have to think hard about how to show good performance to smooth his steps to become President. Therefore, he continues to produce narratives on Twitter that can influence the mindset of many people, whether it is by highlighting his policies or attacking those who oppose him.

Examine Trump's propaganda on Twitter. Theoretically, current propaganda techniques need to be adapted to the media they use. General propaganda techniques such as glittering generalities, plain folks, bandwagon are more inclined to be used in mass media such as television and news. Thayer's propaganda techniques are not entirely accurate for identifying techniques as Donald Trump did. We need to generate thoughts about propaganda techniques in internet-based media with fast, efficient, and effective advantages.

Moreover, propaganda techniques in social media are quite different from mass media. The spread of the propaganda message is accomplished by tapping into an existing

narrative, then amplifying that message with a network of automatic ‘bot’ accounts to force the social media platform algorithm to recognize that message as a trending topic (Prier, 2017). The existence of technology has a significant influence on the spread of messages and propaganda techniques. Technology also affects the cost of spreading false information. In other words, technology becomes a deterministic factor in disseminating fake news (Muq̄sith et al., 2021) or propaganda in this case. What we have not done in this research and can be a suggestion for future research is not only analyzing data on communication patterns through one social media channel such as Twitter.

Conclusion

There are few issues about China and WHO on social media. This means that Trump is more inclined to improve his self-image between domestic success and international political competition. This is because his re-election as President has the highest priority compared to the competition with China. Donald Trump attacked China along with his criticism of WHO, who said the organization was Chinese-centric--seeing Donald Trump's Twitter tweet trends that increase shows that social media is a propaganda and information dissemination force that Trump often uses. The power of its spread, coupled with Trump's number of followers, makes Twitter a quite effective medium in propagating Trump's interests. This research can be actualized in the future on the government's communication patterns on various social media, so that academically we can classify the political agenda, propaganda carried out, and information dissemination force through analysis content from a certain time.

Conflict of Interest

We certify that there is no conflict of interest with any financial, personal, or other relationships with other people or organization related to the material discussed in the manuscript.

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