The Deepening of Jokowi’s Populist Leadership Amidst COVID-19 Pandemic: Exploring its Effect to Economy and Global Partnership

Abstract

The rise of populist leaders amidst the pandemic has become the fundamental debate of political scholars nowadays. This article described the populist leadership pattern of Jokowi in times of the outbreak COVID-19 pandemic and its implication toward the economy and global partnership. The qualitative method and descriptive analysis approach have been used in this article. Through library research in several resources, this article explained the casual relationship of Jokowi’s populist leadership amidst the COVID-19 pandemic and its implication toward the economy and global partnership. The result of this research has shown that Jokowi’s populist leader in the form of bias optimism, anti-science, and leadership ambiguity has led Indonesia into the worsening of pandemic cases among Southeast Asia countries. The incapability of the Indonesian government to tackle the increased number of COVID-19 cases has been proven by the negative economic growth in the scope of regional and global partnerships. Furthermore, this article concludes that Jokowi’s populist leadership has failed to maintain the economy and global partnership.

Keywords: COVID-19, Democratization, Economy, Global Partnership.

Abstrak


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lingkup regional dan kerja sama global. Secara lebih lanjut, artikel ini menyimpulkan bahwa kepemimpinan populis Jokowi telah gagal dalam menjaga perekonomian dan kerja sama global.

Kata kunci: COVID-19, Demokratisasi, Ekonomi, Kerjasama Global

Introduction

The study about populism has become the main debate among political scholars around the world (Brubaker, 2020; Hadiz & Robison, 2017; Pappas, 2016; Pinto, 2018). The debate itself appeared from the uncertain conditions in the middle of a crisis, thus a ‘hero’ figure needs to appears amidst of this uncertain condition. In such a context, the existence of populist leaders is quite necessary to stabilize the people and make them feel safe (Lee, 2017). Following (Goodhart & Lastra, 2018), the populist leader was formed by dissatisfaction of people within political status quo due to highly significant economic recessions.

According to (Sahab, 2017) who have described populism in leadership as political rhetoric that evaluates the primary principle and political validity as an absolute value. Hence, the populist leaders have put the people above all others, so that they will gain public trust. As proven by Richard Hofstadter in (Collins, 1989) has provided a general perspective that populism will be agenda-oriented to build up programs that have the potential for social development. In line with (Laclau, 2005), he argues that populism is a political logic, that the populist leaders have a certain orientation, the orientation towards society and social demands from people’s dissatisfaction with socio-economic conditions.

Referring to research from the Power Welfare and Democracy at Gadjah Mada University in (Savirani et al., 2014), that populism is seen as a Manichean-style political strategy that will certainly be assigned to the people. The populist leader generally will claim that they were acting according to the will of the people, which means that the populist leader believes that every action that is already conducted is in line with demand and represents the people as a whole. As demonstrated by (Canovan, 1999) that the populist utilized democratic institutions as grounds for garnering support by approaching the groups they feel they represent at (society). This means that democracy also plays an important role in ordering populist leaders. As a democratic country, Indonesia also has an important role in gathering several studies of populist leaders in contemporary political issues. Much attention has been paid to the phenomenon of populism in Indonesia (Hadiz & Robison, 2017; Kusumo & Hurriyah, 2019; Mietzner, 2015; Pratikno & Lay, 2013).

The political scholars have described the rise of the populist leader in the middle of the crisis, by providing populist policy on behalf of the people. Following the current
situation, since the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia, hence the study of populist leaders in responding to the global pandemic is increasingly interesting. Such as (Abhipraya et al., 2020; Abramyan, 2020; Meyer, 2020), which focuses to the populist leadership in responding to the COVID-19 and how they build their image in front of the public. Then researching about the issue of populist leadership will always collide about how they take part in the crisis due to the COVID-19 pandemic and in how they responding by their policy, this populist leadership will have implications for how the development of the statistical case of this epidemic. In this case, we will describe and give the analysis of Jokowi’s populist leader based on (Lassa & Booth, 2020) which includes: Bias optimism, anti-science, and leadership ambiguity. Nevertheless, we will straightforwardly explain the impact of Jokowi’s populist leadership as the president of Indonesia to economy and global partnership.

**Research Methods**

This article used qualitative methods with a descriptive analysis approach. The qualitative method is a research method that is carried out in certain conditions that fall in the real world with a focus on understanding a phenomenon, such as what happens, why it happens, and how it happens (Chariri, 2009).

On the other hand, the descriptive analysis approach can be explained as an analytical procedure that is investigated by displaying images, subjects, or research objects such as individuals, institutions, groups, and prevailing society based on written facts, descriptions, and so on (Nawawi, 2015). This article uses secondary data by conducting literature studies to collect written data from journals, books, news, reports, and various other sources to support this research (Nazir, 2004). Next, we explore the results and discussion’s part.

**Bias Optimistic**

The best scenario of leader in facing the crisis can be seen through their preparedness, because this regarding to the policies created and their behavior in public. Things that can get in the way of creating the preparedness on crisis management is bias optimistic on populist leaders, these things can delay the leaders in planning the worst-case scenario on prevention action (Cerulo, 2013). The populist leaders tend to have a positive mindset in the midst of disaster and suppose minimum effect could impact their decision-making process that based on “instinct”, not based on the actual fact (O’Connell, 2009; Ward, 2010). In the middle of the COVID-19 Pandemic, optimism bias can be found in several leaders, Sergio Mattarella from Italy and Donald Trump from the USA (Abramyan, 2020; Shefrin, 2020). In Indonesia, Jokowi as Indonesian president also following this pattern. Jokowi’s administration practically ignored warnings at the
beginning of the outbreak (Fitra, 2020; Roziqin et al., 2021; The Jakarta Post, 2020),
dragging its feet in preparing the health system (Djalante et al., 2020; Firmansyah et al.,
2020). As a result, Indonesia already has the highest rank of COVID-19 infection in
Southeast Asia (Nurbait, 2020).

Leadership ambiguity
In most cases, the populist leader has an ambiguous leadership pattern, they are
incapable of using data as the determination of the policies. This is caused by a clash
between reality and the fact condition of society (Duncan, 2020). The exact condition
also happened to Jokowi populist leader amidst the COVID-19. In dealing with the
pandemic, Jokowi invites religious leaders to provide peace to society, but at the same
time, he also procrastinates the pandemic (Gorbiano & Fachriansyah, 2020). This
evidence also agrees with the opinion that populist leaders tend to be present in the
midst of a bad status quo to provide a sense of calm to their people (Goodhart & Lastra,
2018; Lee, 2017).

Anti-Science
The rise of anti-science groups in the middle of COVID-19 is also increasing
(Hotez, 2021; Hsu, 2020), including the concept of leadership (Coates, 2020). Research
from (Mietzner, 2020) shows that Jokowi’s populist leader and his staff amidst COVID-
19 tend to be anti-science and denying the scientific data (CNN Indonesia, 2020). The
populist leader criminalizes the scientific-based data and refuses the scientist’s
explanation which contradicts their belief, this anti-science behavior adheres to the
majority of the populist leader (Hamilton, 2011). The beginning of anti-science populist
leaders caused by complex requirements besides political stability and a powerful
rooted economy (Apitz et al., 2017), this dilemma has affected the COVID-19 crisis. The
dilemma of protecting the people is shifted by an agenda of economic protection and
political stability, which is the major driving force of Jokowi’s leadership style to
withdraw himself from the scientists.

Its Impact on the Economy and Global Partnership
The economy is an important sector in the entire human life. The state is
obligated to produce an effective policy to strengthen and guarantee the people’s
economy, even in the current crisis. It cannot be denied that the spreading of the COVID-
19 outbreak has impacted a long-lasting economic decrease. The World Bank has
launched the prediction of the decreasing economy through the percentage of each
state. In the Asia Pacific, many states are facing the threat of an economic recession
(Yamali & Putri, 2020). In Indonesia’s case, the IMF has speculated that the economic
growth in the aftermath of the COVID-19 reached 4.3 percent Gross Domestic Product
(GDP) this year (Rahman, 2021). This number is lower within the government projection which assumes that the GDP growth is around 4.5 percent until 5.3 percent. Furthermore, Indonesia is currently in a situation that is not optimistic with the economic recovery, given Jokowi’s populist leadership regulation.

The economic decline had a deal with various states in the world, so it certainly needed the collective hand, especially with the global partnership. Indonesia’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, Retno Marsudi, also confirms that the global partnership in response to COVID-19 is highly encouraged. However, with the social restriction policy which was adopted by the government of Indonesia, it turned out to establish economic cooperation resistance. The hardest hit is the economic partnership with China. Chinese Ambassador to Indonesia, Xiao Qian, clearly explained that the planned partnership within China-Indonesia had to be canceled. He also mentioned 24 Chinese corporations in Indonesia no longer producing since the spreading of contagious COVID-19 (Jaramaya, 2020).

SDG Partnership as the benchmark targets implementation for global partnership within the countries, yet the result of SDG running well and approached the target. Further, as the whole world is bracing the COVID-19 pandemic, reflecting on the SDGs becomes all the more important. To be considerate SDGs partnership among the countries is voluntary and depends on the national or local strategy. Further, the local government action to pursue the global partnership during pandemic situations yet to be confirmed as the well-being agenda. According to the UN Report on the socioeconomic impact of COVID-19 many countries do not have the resources to prepare themselves for the crisis. The pandemic has plunged the world economy into recession with consequences of unemployment and deprivation. The response of the virus is also having a differentiated impact on segments of the populations such as women, children, older people, the person with disabilities, persons in prisons, and the homeless. (Nik Hasan & Hamzah, 2021). Indonesia, at the beginning of the pandemic also resembles what the UN report said as no preparation towards the critical situation. Therefore it can be showed that the loss of economic activity leads to unemployment on the number 4.84% rise on 7% in the pandemic situation (Indonesia - Unemployment Rate 2020 | Statista, n.d.). It also impacted the economic partnership on investment towards Indonesia economic which shown on -9.2% as foreign investment in first quartal of 2020 on Year on Year (YoY) Growth Rate (BAPPENAS, 2020). Indonesia’s dependence on china's investment makes the big gap toward the number of investments every 1% investment values decrease it impacts Indonesia 0.3% value decrease. The prediction of the loss of 127 trillion if the country cannot handle the situation is based on the Institute for development of Economic and Finance (INDEF) (Investasi, n.d.).
Acknowledge, The International trade and foreign investment are essentially important for the national economy. International trade benefits Indonesia in (1) bringing in large foreign exchange, especially for exporters and producers, (2) increasing the export side will increase production capacity resulting in the availability of new job opportunities, (3) the transfer of goods which will be followed by the entry of capital into the country, (4) the occurrence of a transfer of technology from abroad to the country (Sugiharini, 2006). The contribution of foreign companies from the United States of America, Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea in Indonesia is significantly helping the Indonesian government to solve the problem of unemployment and the lack of capital. The absence of those companies such as Alpan Lightning, Sagami Electric, Denso, Panasonic, Meiloon, Kenda Tire, and LG Electronics in Indonesia might give additional burden to the Indonesian government in terms of unemployment and the lack of capital since the total of investment from those countries reached $850 million or around Rp 11,9 trillion fresh capital followed with the 30 thousand people are absorbed as workforce (Indonesia M., 2020)

Other influences that could affect global partnerships are attributed to the lack of stability of central government for crisis management. As Indonesia followed the whole instruction and support SDGs as the benchmark target for global partnership the capability within the central government has to be stable enough and complex. Therefore, despite all the decreased movement to enhance the global partnership within the country during the pandemic, Indonesia through MOFA supported any possibilities of global partnership.

Conclusion

The existence of populist leaders amidst of crisis has become the main topic to be discussed by political scholars, specifically in the middle of COVID-19 pandemic. As a current president of Indonesia, crisis condition due to this epidemic is a moment where he supposed to appears to provide a certainty in community. However, in many cases, despite of using his authority to create a prevention step to go against this virus, instead Jokowi prefers to reject the fact that this epidemic is exist in Indonesia by performing populist leader characteristic: bias optimistic, leadership ambiguity, and anti-science.

Jokowi’s populist leadership has created regulations that do not seem optimistic about the national economic recovery. In addition, in the case of implementing the SDGs as the standard for the success of global partnerships, Indonesia is still lack in trying to achieve a global partnership. Economic and global partnerships, which also include international trade and foreign investment, rely heavily on national and local approaches and strategies in supporting all possible global partnerships. The central
government of Indonesia is recommended to be able to maintain stability for crisis management that may occur.
References


