Unravelling the Two-Step Flow: A Social Network Analysis of the Indonesia U-20 World Cup Cancellation Discourse

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Abstract. The rejection of the Israeli national team at the Indonesian U-20 World Cup became controversial because FIFA cancelled Indonesia as the host of the U-20 World Cup. This rejection drew pros and cons from Indonesian society and became a hot conversation topic at the international level. This study examines and explores public social media conversations regarding the U-20 World Cup in Indonesia to determine the main actors who dominated the discussion concerning the cancellation of Indonesia as the host of the U-20 World Cup. The research aims to identify the key focus of the discussion and the actors who initiated and drove the conversation. The Social Network Analysis method is employed, with data collection conducted using the Netlytic-based website software. A total of 12,314 tweets were obtained through Netlytic, and the results reveal the primary actors or nodes that dominated the discussion related to the issue of the Indonesia U-20 World Cup and the discourse surrounding the impact of the cancellation of Indonesia as the host of the U-20 World Cup.

1. Introduction

The FIFA U-20 World Cup, or before 2005 called the FIFA Youth World Cup, is an official football championship held by FIFA every two years. This championship is followed by every country that sends a national football team in the age group under 20 years. Indonesia was appointed host for the U-20 World Cup chosen by FIFA [1], but on March 29, 2023, FIFA officially announced the cancellation of Indonesia as the host for the 2023 U-20 World Cup, which had a severe impact on the U-20 Indonesian National Team and jeopardized their participation in the prestigious tournament. Prior to revoking Indonesia's hosting privileges, FIFA had already called off the drawing event scheduled to take place in Bali on March 31, 2023. The cancellation was prompted by widespread opposition from various groups including the inclusion of the Israel U-20 national team as participants in the tournament [2]. This rejection gained momentum as it was voiced by influential figures and institutions in Indonesia, including mass organizations, the political party PKS faction, and two governors, I Wayan Koster of Bali and Ganjar Pranowo of Central Java [3]. These officials opposed the Israeli national team's participation, citing it as contradictory to Indonesia's support for Palestinian independence, which has been restrained by Israel [4]. As the issue of rejection gained attention, FIFA decided to postpone the withdrawal deadline for the U-20 World Cup, originally planned to be held in Bali. Eventually, a letter arrived declaring Indonesia's cancellation as the host, causing further discussions and making it a viral topic on social media [5]. The discussion is lively on Twitter social media. Twitter plays a significant role in political communication in Indonesia because it allows individuals to join and participate in tweeting, retweeting, and replying to political topics. This has been particularly notable since 2013, when Twitter emerged as Indonesia's primary social media platform, surpassing Facebook. The open nature of Twitter enables widespread engagement and discussion on current political issues, allowing individuals to express their opinions, share information, and engage in political discourse. As a result, in previous research, Twitter has become a significant platform for political communication and has contributed to shaping public opinion and mobilizing political movements in Indonesia [6].

1.1 Objectives

Indonesia's rejection of the Israeli national team at the U-20 World Cup has become a controversial topic of conversation on social media. This study aims to examine and explore public conversation on social media and actors regarding the U-20 World Cup in Indonesia including examines the role of technical objects in shaping social network structures, explores how human-object interactions shape relationship patterns, and understands how the influence of nodes can be found in social network analysis.

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2. Literature Review

2.1 Social Media and Public Discourse

Social media is a web-based tool for interacting, conversing, and sharing content in images, videos, or links to resources [7]. Nevertheless, social media is now being used as a communication channel to convey public opinion [8]. In the same tone, political campaigns, advertising, and teaching performance [9]. Especially during the Covid-19 pandemic, online platforms have become more prominent as tools that make it easier to discuss [10]. A similar case highlighted the positive impact of social media by making it easier for users to interact with many people regardless of distance and time, allowing them to express themselves, disseminate information quickly, and use social media as a means of criticism and suggestions through direct social media influencer accounts [11].

Social media influencers also employ the use of social media. Social media influencers can be considered third-party individuals who have cultivated meaningful relationships with different organizations' stakeholders through the production and distribution of content, being active online, and making public appearances. Strategic social media communication is the deliberate use of communication strategies by organizations or social media influencers that can help organizations achieve their objectives [12]. Influencers aim to build initial ideas for forming public opinion and building issues and opinions through the investigative process of citizen journalism to help followers understand trending issues and move individually and stick to principles or personal opinions according to trending issues [13]. For example, "green" influencers post sustainability content, which aims to inspire the environmental activism movement for young people [14]. In addition, influencers are recognized for their ability to influence their followers by sharing photos and spreading the electronic word of mouth (EWoM) on their social media platforms [15].

Nevertheless, social media is a place for online activism. There are three ways how social media facilitates online activism: providing opportunities for individuals to express experiences and opinions regarding the issues raised, allowing online communities to provide support, form activities, or respond to challenges in the form of negative responses, and social media provides opportunities to involve people outside the community to participate in discussing issues lifted. Various forms of online activism exist, such as changing social media profile pictures and sharing posts about social issues [16]. For example, there are several online activism in social media, such as Black Live Matter, where white people can provide racial justice support by sharing black activist posts so they can convince other white friends of the benefits of racial justice, online activism using #breathemimple [17]hashtag and posts of topless photos to normalize the non-sexual representation of breasts and reclaim the female body [16] and #metoo movement which has the motive to get attention and action on the problem of sexual harassment by empowering women who have experienced sexual harassment by replying to Alyssa Milano's tweet "If you have been sexually harassed or assaulted write 'me too' as a reply to this tweet" [18]. Nevertheless, the use of hashtags in online activism can act as an initial initiative in generating important conversations to raise issues that require advocacy. By using relevant hashtags, users can present significant issues and gain wider public attention. In this context, hashtags have become an effective tool in building awareness, mobilizing people, and supporting social change [19].

2.2 Social Network Analysis and Two Step Flow Theory

Social Network Analysis analyses social structures and explains essential stakeholders' positions, often called critical actors. The term “actor” refers to the most critical person in disseminating information because they have the most significant effect on social networks [20]. Additionally, Social Network Analysis (SNA) is an analytical technique that can identify groups on social media, measure user participation in these groups, and analyse how information spreads among users. It allows for measuring a person's level of influence or strength and exploring how social interactions on social media can influence individual and group behaviour [21]. For example, the previous research used Social Network Analysis to discover more about the drivers of 5G and Covid-19 conspiracy theories and strategies to overcome this misinformation [22]. The advantages of using social network analysis also facilitate netnographic methods to make it easier to detect groups and sub-communities by visualizing collaborative networks [23].

Netnography is a qualitative research method that studies online communities, interactions, and cultures where involvement ranges from observing online conversations to actively participating in social media [24]. The netnography method is used to understand social relations in social networks and analyse the structure and pattern of relationships between community members called actors (nodes) and relationships between members called ties [25]. Nodes or actors refer to people or messages, whereas Tide can describe the relationship between actors—for example, a bond to share information, ideas, and values [26]. Netnography has several advantages, including broadening the scope of research geographically by linking dispersed worldwide networks. It facilitates researchers' access to research populations, especially those difficult to reach or involving sensitive research topics [24].

In the context of social network, there is a concept known as opinion leaders. Opinion leaders are individuals who consume media content at a higher rate compared to other members of the community. [27]. Opinion leaders have characteristics that include higher knowledge and status than their followers. They are also easily contacted and accessible to others. In addition, the opinion leader has an extensive network of contacts with key agencies. They tend to be innovative and have a
significant influence in influencing the attitudes and behaviour of others because of the knowledge they have [28]. They also share some similarities with influencers, but they differ in certain aspects. Unlike influencers, opinion leaders possess the ability to influence their followers. Influencers' posts, on the other hand, do not motivate their followers to seek information from alternative sources, resulting in a lower level of trust in them as a reliable source of information [27]. The concept of an opinion leader appears in the two-step flow theory, this theory explains how messages move from sender to receiver in a marketing environment using opinion leaders as mediators between message senders to consumers who refer to message recipients at the end [29].

2.3 Phenomena of Social Media in Indonesia

Digital technology, including social media, continues to proliferate. However, the existence of social media can have complex impacts, such as the emergence of fake news or hoaxes [30]. The need for binding regulations in writing information on social media exacerbates this situation, making it challenging to filter. It allows everyone to access social media without being filtered first. It can result in the dissemination of anonymous information or from unknown sources, as well as the spread of hate speech [31]. It is also like the negative effect of social media, especially on Instagram, with the emergence of cyberbullying, which indicates a crisis of language politeness and ethics on social media [32]. There is also a buzzed phenomenon in Indonesia on social media, where the buzzed is an agreement of a party to achieve its political goals by conveying provocative messages or attacking personal issues [33]. Most buzzers are either anonymous accounts on social media, created to promote the branding of a particular candidate pair, or they can be individuals who engage in spreading negative campaigns against other candidate pairs [34].

In positive ways, the increasingly popular social media has made politicians choose it as an effective media for campaigning. It can be seen in the phenomenon of the 2019 Presidential Election in Indonesia, where the public can easily access information about the activities, views, and ideas promoted by the presidential candidate pairs [35] and during the pandemic covid-19, social media was used to promote vaccination programs and policies in Indonesia [36]. Not only that, but TikTok social media is also used as a media campaign to campaign for the hand washing movement to stop the transmission of the Covid-19 virus by producing videos and using the hashtag #safehandschallenge [37].

3. Methods

This research is descriptive qualitative research, with the results describing the structure and actors in network communication using the Social Network Analysis technique. SNA is an analytical approach that identifies social structures and explains the leading positions or key actors [38]. Furthermore, SNA explains human relations by using graph theory. Using graph theory, SNA examines the structure of social relations in groups, revealing the connections between individuals. The neutrality index in SNA is the most common measure of the importance of users in a communications network. Analysis of the relationship's characteristics will continue by calculating the centrality and the relationship between nodes and edges using SNA so that in research, it is possible to determine which user has the most significant influence on the issue under study [39].

This study examines discussions related to actor-network to the U-20 World Cup in Indonesia. The data obtained for this research produced conversation volume, conversation trends, sentiment (dynamic analysis), and social network analysis (SNA) maps derived from conversations on Twitter during the data collection period. Data processing comes from Twitter by crawling Twitter data, storing Twitter data, and analyzing and visualizing Twitter data—retrieval of data using Netlytic using several keywords related to Indonesia U-20 World Cup.

4. Data Collection

This research obtained a dataset from a software website based on Netlytic. Within keywords related to Piala Dunia U-20 (AND) Indonesia using Indonesia on language filter and Indonesia World Cup on English language filter. There are 9288 tweets for Piala Dunia U-20 (AND) Indonesia and 3026 tweets for Indonesia World Cup. Netlytic shows data sets of the word cloud visualization and network properties, including the diameter, density, Reciprocity, centralization, and modularity.

4.1 Network Properties

Fig. 1. shows a dataset of tweets mentioning the word "Indonesia World Cup" in English language filter.

Based on the dataset network properties result (see Figure.1), Netlytic obtained diameter results within the keyword "Indonesia World Cup" (English language filter) as much as 10 meters; thereby, Netlytic concluded that distance farthest between two deep nodes network is 10. The density is worth 0.000448; therefore, Netlytic informs that the status of this network has low density because the nodes connected in the network are relatively few. The Reciprocity results from the keyword Indonesia World Cup worth 0.006771. Reciprocity which means in the network, this has low
Reciprocity because there are few reciprocal connections. For Centralization results, it is worth 0.062760, which means that this network has low centralization because no nodes significantly influence the network. Netlytic also obtained Modularity results with the keyword Indonesia World Cup worth 0.866600 modularity. This network has high modularity because it divides the nodes into separate and different groups. It also visible that there are three main actors with the highest level of popularity, namely the accounts @dw_sports @levyninho and @roynemer.

4.2 Word Cloud Visualization

Netlytic’s Text Analysis feature visualizes tweets' most frequently used words as a word cloud. With word cloud visualization, Netlytic quickly finds important topics that prioritize and highlight common vocabulary.

This study examines the word cloud visualization using the filter Top 50 keywords in both the topic and language filter. Refers to Figure 3, not related to the issue of the U-U-20 World Cup, namely the existence of hashtags #GueBarengErickThohir and username @erickthohir. Meanwhile, Figure 4 shows the emergence of the @dofthorman account that is not related to the U-20 World Cup issue.

5. Results and Discussion

Discussions related to Indonesia in the U-20 World Cup have become trending on social media Twitter. The emergence of these talks began when I Wayan Koster, the Governor of Bali and Ganjar Pranowo, Central Java, issued a statement rejecting the Israeli national team at the U-20 World Cup in Indonesia, which caused FIFA to cancel Indonesia as the host for the U-20 World Cup. There are varying opinions regarding the rejection of the Israeli national team's participation in the U-20 World Cup event. Some argue that accepting the presence of the Israeli team is necessary to stay professional and avoid politicizing the situation and prioritize the threatened fate of the Indonesian national team instead. On the other hand, some oppose the presence of Israel in Indonesia and view it as a betrayal of the country's constitution [40]. View based on the data provided by Netlytic, discussions regarding the cancellation of Indonesia as a host in Indonesia is increasingly being discussed on social media.

Using Social Network Analysis (SNA), accounts with the highest popularity in their network are referred to as nodes or actors. Previous studies have defined the term "actor" as the most influential person in disseminating information, as they have the greatest impact on social networks [20]. As main actors or nodes, they have a role in conveying and controlling the spread of messages and information in the network so that it can determine the direction of public opinion regarding the issue [31]. Based on Netlytic data using English language filters, there are three Twitter accounts with the highest network popularity: @dw_sports, @levyninho, and @roynemer. As main actors or nodes, they play a role in conveying and controlling the spread of messages and information within the network, thereby influencing public opinion on the issue [27]. Furthermore, these leading actors or nodes share common characteristics, such as having more than 10,000 followers, and all three accounts are focused on sports; @dw_sports is a German international broadcaster specializing in football, @levyninho is a football journalist and commentator, and @roynemer is an Argentinian football fan reporting on the Argentina.
national team. Referring to the characteristics of opinion leaders, these three accounts can be considered as opinion leaders. They possess higher status and knowledge compared to their followers, evident from the number of followers they have and the consistent focus of their messages, as well as their credibility as journalists.

The first main actor, @dw_sports, had a role in informing regarding the cancellation of Indonesia as host through a tweet he attached. On March 29, there was a tweet containing, "Indonesia will no longer host the U-20 World Cup, which kicks off next month. FIFA decided to move the tournament after Bali's governor called for Israel to be banned." and continued March 30, there was a tweet "You've destroyed our dream." Disappointment in Indonesia after FIFA's announcement that the U-20 World Cup will take place elsewhere." and attach a photo containing a quote from Rabban Tasmim, Indonesian striker "Energy, time, sweat and even blood we have put in, but in a moment failed because of political reasons. Here's out big dream that you've destroyed". From this tweet, nodes would like to convey the disappointment of the Indonesian national team players due to statements from politicians referring to the Governor of Bali which resulted in the cancellation of Indonesia as the host of the U-20 World Cup.

As well as in the next tweets containing "The U-20 World Cup has been removed from Indonesia after Bali's governor questioned Israel's participation. The decision was made less than two months before May's kick-off." The addition of video uploads in the tweet contains explanations regarding countries that have been stripped of hosting tournaments in previous tournaments. In this tweet, @dw_sports conduct citizen journalism investigative processes to help followers understand trending issues. Through uploaded videos, followers can more understand that rejecting Olympic sports participants is nothing new. We can also conclude that in this tweet, the @dw_sports account takes advantage of Twitter's video upload feature to make it easier for followers to understand related issues.

Meanwhile, @levyninho, on his Twitter, gave several tweets related to the issue of the Indonesia World Cup. On March 25, the first tweet discussing this issue resulted from a retweet quote from the @kann_news account (an Israel Public Broadcasting account) that also discussed Indonesia's rejection of the Israeli national team. In the quote tweet, he said, "#U20WC in Indonesia: KAN News is reporting that the U-20 World Cup draw in Indonesia is CANCELLED, due to the demands of the hosts and Iraq not to be drawn with Israel. Here we go…? ". On March 28, the account owner @levyninho tweeted, "So what's going on with the U-20 World Cup in Indonesia? Everyone is wondering. To give some context, I wrapped up this complex, hot, and changing-by-the-minute story—with input from @aaurrahman and @FootyRankings. #U-20WC #FIFAWorldCupU-20 #Indonesia2023" added an excerpt link containing related articles published on Babagol, international football news from various countries that might help his followers understand the current issues. The article included contains an explanation regarding the timeline story of the rejection of the Israeli national team, which began with relations between Indonesia and Israel until the arrival of a letter refusing the participation of the Israeli national team in the U-20 World Cup from the Governor of Bali to the Minister of Sports. He also uses three hashtags related to the U-20 World Cup to reach an audience interested in the U-20 World Cup as well as Indonesia (since he included the hashtag #Indonesia2023 which represents events in Indonesia in 2023). The following day, he also delivered several tweets regarding eliminating Indonesia as the host in the U-20 World Cup and information regarding Argentina replacing it as host. In one of his tweets, he also featured a news video from @i24NEWS English with the headline "Indonesia Removed as Host of U-20 Cup Over Israel Row".

Unlike the two, the @roynemer account, in its three tweets discussing the issue of the Indonesia World Cup, only conveyed that FIFA removed Indonesia from hosting the U-20 World Cup with an offer from the AFA for Argentina as host. The account behind that wants to inform about Argentina as a new host for U-20 World Cup.

On the other hand, @Idextratime is the main actor in the Indonesian language filter keyword. The @Idextratime account is a verified Twitter account from Indonesia that discusses football explicitly. There are several tweets related to this issue: the impact of the cancellation of the Indonesian U-20 World Cup on Champion (owner of the merchandise license), FIFA removing the Indonesian U-20 World Cup soundtrack on their website and social media. Statements by political parties and the governor of Bali rejecting the Israeli national team, the statement by the Palestinian ambassador on the issue of The Indonesian U-20 World Cup, the appointment of a replacement host for the Indonesian U-20 World Cup, Jokowi's statement after Indonesia was revoked as the host, threats of sanctions for Indonesia and Erick Thohir who flew to FIFA headquarters to discuss Indonesia's fate at the U-20 World Cup. In addition, through word cloud visualization, there are several related keywords: dolls, jackets, t-shirts, licenses, souvenirs, bags, and hats, which refer to merchandise made by Indonesia for the U-20 World Cup. Several tweets show the loss of merchandise vendors due to Indonesia's rejection of the Israeli national team. It can be concluded from the four users who shared tweets related to the Indonesia U-20 World Cup issue. The account are actors who play a role in helping the audience understand the current issues and problem for Indonesian, such as the causes and effects of Indonesia's cancellation as host of the U-20 World Cup in Indonesia.

Of the four Twitter accounts that have the network with the highest popularity or what are called actors or nodes, they have the power to disseminate information and influence the perceptions of others through social media networks. As the first mediator, nodes absorb information from external sources such as news or other media content that they adapt and transmit to their followers. The message the nodes want to convey can be seen in their tweets. Like @dw_sports and @levyninho, who wanted to convey that Indonesia's
cancellation as host of the U-20 World Cup was due to the statement refusing the participation of the Israeli national team delivered by I Wayan Koster, Governor of Bali. While the other nodes, namely @royenemer, wanted to convey a message to their followers, namely the cancellation of Indonesia as the host for the U-20 World Cup resulted in the transfer of the host for the U-20 World Cup to Argentina and @idextratime as the first mediator trying to share some information regarding the negative impact resulting from cancellation of Indonesia as host of the U-20 World Cup.

Furthermore, the word cloud visualization provided by Netlytic can provide information about the words that often appear in the conversations carried out by the first mediators (nodes) and the responses of their followers (end consumers). The word cloud can provide an overview of the messages most emphasized by the mediators and the most relevant topics in the conversation. However, a hashtag appears in the world cloud visualization but is not listed and is irrelevant to the messages conveyed by the nodes, namely the hashtag #GueBarengErickThohir. Not only hashtags but the username @ErickThohir also appears on the word cloud visualization with an Indonesian filter. The emergence of a hashtag related to Erick Thohir can be considered a buzzer, as referred to previous research, buzzers act on social media by disseminating topics and techniques using narrative writing, creating hashtags, conducting online conversations on social media, and creating creative images and video content [41]. Also, in the previous research the presence of hashtags can show movement the digital opinion can create mobility in a communication network [42]. So that using the hashtag #GueBarengErickThohir on the Indonesian U20 World Cup issue concludes that taking advantage of buzzers in social media campaigning is possible to increase popularity, especially Erick Thohir's as Chair of PSSI and increase Erick Thohir's popularity as predicted as one of the presidential candidates in 2024.

6. Conclusion

Referring to the Two Step Flow theory, it was found that there are nodes in the social network discussing the cancellation of Indonesia as the host of the U-20 World Cup. The accounts @dw_sports and @levyninho, as nodes, inform that the cancellation was caused by the statement rejecting the participation of the Israeli national team in the U-20 World Cup by I Wayan Koster, the governor of Bali. Furthermore, @royenemer and @idextratim, as nodes, discuss the impact of the cancellation. These impacts include losses to merchandise sellers and the change of the U-20 World Cup host to Argentina. This statement from the nodes can be categorized as a mediator that influences the dissemination of information to followers or other users within the network. Users or followers within this social network play the role of end consumers who receive information from the mediators, process it, and form their opinions and attitudes regarding the cancellation of Indonesia as the host.

The statement of rejecting the participation of the Israeli national team by I Wayan Koster acts as the initial mediator that influences the spread of information within the social network. Followers or other users then process the impact of the cancellation within the network and form their opinions and attitudes toward the issue. These findings highlight the importance of mediators in directing the flow of information within social networks and influencing the perceptions and attitudes of other users. Additionally, this research demonstrates that the process of influence does not only occur from direct information sources to end consumers but also through mediators as intermediaries in the dissemination of information.

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