

Religious Populism in Mainstream Media between Indonesia and India

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Abstract

Introduction: The mainstream media used political and media logic on religious populism to reinforce ideological changes in contemporary society. This study investigated how media mediatize the 212 rally (*aksi 212*) and the 2017 Jakarta Governorial Election as religious populism cases. This study also compared how media in Indonesia and India delivered the content based on the majority identity.

Methods: This study applied a qualitative approach. Detik.com, Metro TV, and Republika Daily were selected based on their delivery content platform and media ownership. The qualitative content analysis was applied to explore the concepts of political and media logic. Then, the results of Islamic populism in Indonesia were compared with Hindu populism in India.

Findings: This study found that the three media mediatized *aksi 212* and the 2017 Jakarta Governorial Election as religious populism by using direct interaction. Detik.com was applying media logic while Metro TV and Republika Daily performed political logic. In comparing religious populism between Indonesia and India, the finding confirmed that populism came from a major identity. The finding showed that economic motivation could be escalated in parallel with religious identity.

Originality: This study become a novelty since no previous studies investigate the different delivery content platforms and the media ownership including comparing the mediatization process between two countries. Previous studies focused on the media concentration based on media ownership, platform, media landscape, and media policy without a mediatization process and religious populism. The previous studies of the mediatization of religious populism were conducted in a single case.

Keywords: Mediatization, Religious Populism, Political and Media Logic, Mainstream Media.

Introduction

The mediatization process demonstrates the mainstream media's significance in cultural and social development (Hjarvard, 2012) This process has an impact on many parts of society, including the structure of the economy and family, gender and power relations, the aging process, and the political apparatus (Mazzoleni, 2014). Contemporary society is a component of the media, which is inextricably linked to culture and other social institutions (Hepp et al., 2015). Mediatization is used by the mainstream media to promote changes in social connections of modernity by repeating and disseminating ideological content (Couldry & Hepp, 2013; Michielsen & van der Horst, 2022).

Mediatization is a long-term process of increasing the media's importance, as well as its direct and indirect impact on a wide range of socioeconomic areas. Mediatization is concerned with the evolution of communication mediums. Mediatization implies that the technical, semiotic, and economic aspects of the mass media promote reliance, attraction,

and excess (McGuire & Reeves, 2003). These issues are inextricably linked to the three tasks of the media in communication. The first is the forwarding function, which is inherent in media technology's ability to overcome the space and time divide. The second is a semiotic function that involves encoding and arranging messages to make them appropriate for human conversation. The third purpose is the economic function, which emphasizes the uniformity of media goods as a result of mass manufacturing procedures (Wettstein et al., 2018).

If the process occurs in politics, it is referred to as political mediatization. (Strömbäck, 2008). Political mediatization is growing the prominence of the media and its impact on political processes, players, organizations, and institutions (Mazzoleni, 2014). The media, as a major source of public and political information, autonomously influences politics by constructing themselves according to their desire. Political logic controls the content and coverage of current affairs including politics in the media (Strömbäck & Esser, 2014). In selecting content direction and coverage, the media uses news value criteria rather than political actors or institutional positions (Bachmann et al., 2022).

Religious populism is one style of politics mediated via the political and media argumentation. Populism is a political strategy in which the loyal are pitted against the elite (Dehanas & Shterin, 2018). Religious populism has two elements and is reproduced in various faiths (Apahideanu, 2014). The first dimension is profoundly religious in the sense that Religion is characterized by its relationship to the spiritual world. This dimension takes the shape of a traditional religion, which is structured in order to achieve God's design and plan. It also indicates that believers have a special relationship with God. As a result, Christian populism is doing God's job by fighting against godless foes on Earth. Second, the disguised religious component discusses the sacralization of politics in contemporary culture. Another spiritually concealed component of religious populism is the sacralization of politics in contemporary society (Block & Negrine, 2017). Religion has molded it, and it is oriented on holy experience. Populism, in this sense, embodies and characterizes entities with secular purposes. This is separate from the ultimate and transcendent forces that reshape the world as a result of ordinary evil politics. Although the two characteristics are distinct, they compliment one another. Whenever the hidden religious component of groups that appear secular makes open announcements, the spiritual aspect emerges (Apahideanu, 2014).

In the aftermath of the 2017 Jakarta Governarial Election, foreign media speculated that Ahok's defeat was due to their Christian faith. As a result, The BBC covered the story with the headline "*Jakarta election: Christian governor concedes to Muslim rival*" (BBC News, 2017). USA Today published a story titled "*Muslim voters outs Jakarta's Christian governor*" (Maresca, 2017). Similarly, the New York Times ran a story with the headline "*Jakarta Governor Concedes Defeat in Religiously Tinged Election*" (Cochrane, 2017). Furthermore, albeit not as straightforward as the BBC, USA Today, or the New York Times, Al-Jazeera story's nailed the identity emotion in the tumultuous 2017 Jakarta Governarial Election with the title "*Governor Ahok concedes Jakarta election to Baswedan*" (Al Jazeera, 2017). In a special report published between August 26 and September 1, 2017, The 2017 Jakarta Governarial Election was mentioned in the Economist magazine, "*The Puzzle of Political Islam.*" According to reports, Islamists supporting Anies Baswedan persuaded Muslim electors that voting a non-Muslim leader is prohibited.

The 2017 Jakarta Governarial Election was noted as one of Islamic or religious populism in Indonesia. Previously, Islamic populism occurred before Indonesian independence with the rise of Syarikat Islam (Hadiz, 2016). Syarikat Islam was the metamorphosis of Syarikat Dagang Islam. Syarikat Dagang Islam fought to strengthen Muslim economics, especially in facing the dominance of Chinese businesses which was supported by Dutch colonial. On the other side, Dutch colonial gave economic privileges to secular elites and Chinese minority (Hadiz, 2016; Sommers, 2009). The change from Syarikat Dagang Islam to Syarikat Islam caused riots in Kudus, Solo, and Surabaya. In those cities, the business competition between Indonesian and Chinese was fierce. Islam was used to encouraging an anti-Chinese mindset. Syarikat Islam members were suspected as the actors of an anti-Chinese riot in Kudus, Central Java, since the actors were identified very Islamic identity (Purdey, 2006; Sommers, 2009).

Like the 2017 Jakarta Governarial Election, one of the governor's candidates, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (Ahok) was a Christian religion and Chinese minority. During his duty as acting Governor and his campaign as an incumbent candidate before the election, he was accused of insulting Islam by referring to a verse in the Koran in his speech (BBC News, 2017). Consequently, *umma* obstructed Ahok to be a governor for the second period. *Umma* expressed the refusal against Ahok by arranging various *aksi bela Islam* rallies (Islam defending action), culminating in the rally on December 2, 2016 or known widely as *aksi 212* (CNN Indonesia, 2018). Ahok was charged and sentenced to two years in prison (BBC News, 2017). The court said that Purnama was 'convincingly guilty of committing blasphemy' (Al Jazeera, 2017). The accusation and the rallies delegitimated Ahok as a candidate of Jakarta's governor. *Umma* was confronted by elites represented by Ahok, Christian, and the Chinese elite. *Umma* as a representative of religious populists expressed that the next Jakarta governor ought to be a Muslim (Hadiz, 2016, 2017).

However, *aksi 212*, or the demonstration of religious populism was not democracy, but mobocracy (Di Tella, 2008). *First*, there was socially mass mobilization with or without autonomous class organizations. *Second*, *aksi 212*'s mass was mobilized in terms of religious and ethnic sentiment, not in terms of class. *Third*, most religious leadership came from middle-class sectors (Di Tella, 2008). Moreover, the two largest Islamic organizations, NU and Muhammadiyah did not participate in *aksi 212* (Aziz, 2017).

Previous studies showed that Indonesia performed Islamic populism (Hara, 2018; Mietzner, 2018) or religious populism (Barton et al., 2021) as political mediatization (Dehanas & Shterin, 2018), especially during the 2017 Jakarta Governarial Election (Setijadi, 2017). Unfortunately, there are no specific studies concerned about the main role of media during their reports in the 2017 Jakarta Regional Election. Previous studies found that the media have an important role in the success or failure of populism (Freedman, 2018; Hameleers et al., 2017; Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017). Although, populism is shaped in reaction to the political context and societal structures (Bergem, 2022). Media is called a domestic actor had a significant role to raise or develop populism (Manucci, 2017; Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017). Populism mobilization is facilitated by the media (Alonso-Muñoz & Casero-Ripollés, 2020; Schmidtke, 2021). Populist political actors used and were covered by the media, among other outlets, to express their messages and connect with the people (Block & Negrine, 2017). The mainstream media is the principal means of communicating politics to the general population (Reiter et al., 2021). Politicians rely on the news media to assess public opinion (Romeijn, 2020). They use media coverage as public opinion agents to gain attention, acceptance, and legitimacy for

their actions (Wettstein et al., 2018). Therefore, the first objective of this study is to investigate how media mediatize Islamic populism by qualitatively analyzing the contents of some media on different delivery platforms and different media ownerships.

Islamic populism as religious populism was identified as a means for political actors to get sympathy from their followers (Barton et al., 2021), especially before the election (Setijadi, 2017). A prior study discovered that the right-wing populist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) employed a similar form of Hinduism populism in India during the 2014 general election (Yilmaz et al., 2021). In Indonesia, the majority is Islam identity (Zuhdi, 2018) while in India, Hinduism identity is the majority (Chakravarty et al., 2019). The result of a previous study about populism in Malaysia that had Islam identity as majority showed that Malaysian politics is neither populist nor likely to veer that way (Weiss, 2020). In Pakistan, religious populism was observed in vote banks, electives, party structure, and experience in electoral politics (Sabat & Qadar, 2020). A recent study showed populism in Turkey that had Islam as the majority identity was not explored on media logic or mediatization process (Uysal, 2022). A prior research in India reported on social fragmentation in villages dominated by Hindus, villages dominated by Muslims, and villages with a nearly equal percentage of both religious groups (Chakravarty et al., 2019). Therefore, the second objective of this study is to compare the mediatization of Islamic populism in Indonesia and the mediatization of Hindu populism in India based on their majority of religious identity.

The two objectives of this study become novelty since no previous studies investigate the different delivery content platform and the media ownership including comparing the mediatization process between two countries. Previous studies focused on the media concentration based on media ownership (Lim, 2011), platform (Tapsell, 2014), media landscape (Nugroho et al., 2013) and media policy (Sukmayadi, 2019) without mediatization process and religious populism. The previous studies of mediatization of religious populism were conducted in single case (Barton et al., 2021; Chakravarty et al., 2019; Sabat & Qadar, 2020; Uysal, 2022; Weiss, 2020).

Methods

This study applied a qualitative approach to populism (Hepp et al., 2015) to accomplish the objective. The first objective of this study was conducted through qualitative content analysis (Bengtsson, 2016; Irwansyah & Hardiah, 2020; Mayring, 2014; Peker, 2022) on the coverage of *aksi 212* on December 2, 2016, and the 2017 Jakarta Governarial Election. The momentum of *aksi 212* and the 207 Jakarta Governarial Election was picked to address the research question based on factual data (Hammarberg et al., 2016). Three media such as Detik.com, MetroTV, and Republika Daily were selected as contextual single case studies (Ridder, 2017; Simons, 2015; Yin, 2018). Detik.com was selected as Indonesia's first and most popular news website because of its widest audience reach and popularity. Metro TV was selected as Indonesia's premier news media television station as it advocated tolerance and pluralism (Wölfer & Foroutan, 2022), multiculturalism, diversity, and nationalism (Ayuningtyas & Alif, 2009). Islamist publication Republika Daily as digital, epaper, and print news media was selected for its support of conservative policies (Steele, 2018). The key person of the three media were interviewed (Caiani & Carvalho, 2021) to enrich the qualitative data from content analysis and to explore their policy on religious populism.

The way of three media mediatize the Islamic populism was analyzed based on (1) media logic and (2) political logic (Strömbäck, 2008). Media logic was a driving force behind news agendas (Maurer et al., 2022). Media logic, in its broadest sense, encompasses the everyday editorial shaping and structuring of media material (Cushion et al., 2016). Specifically, media logic refers to the institutional, technological, and social elements, including the formats, manufacturing and distribution routine, traditions, and requirements of news media (Strömbäck, 2011). Political logic refers to the requirement to design, decide on, and implement policies, as well as the need to succeed in various strategies for winning support in elections or the war for public opinion, as well as in bargaining and negotiations (Strömbäck & Esser, 2014). Then, the comparison of mediatization (Grinberg, 2022) between Islamic and Hinduism populism would be analyzed through the history, activities, representation, and media use (Moffitt & Tormey, 2013). The history, activities, representation, and media use were explored via direct interaction between populist actors and media (Manucci, 2017). The result of the comparison was mostly presented in the discussion part. Finally, this study applied source triangulation (Guion, 2002; Honorene, 2017; Irwansyah, 2020).

Results

This study found that Detik.com, Metro TV, and Republika Daily mediatized *aksi 212*, the rally took place on the second of December 2016. In the 2017 Jakarta Governorial Election, *aksi 212* was the apex of the Islamic populist movement or plan to defeat Ahok, a Chinese and Christian candidate. The three media came with different angle or points of view on delivering the news not only because of their different platform and ownership but also their media or political logic.

This study found that Chairul Tanjung owns Detik.com, Indonesia's largest online media outlet. Chairul Tanjung was a former economic coordinator minister in President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono cabinet. Yudhoyono's son, Agus Harimurti Yudhoyono was one of the Jakarta's Governor candidates, besides Ahok and Anies. This study found people believed that Detik.com supported Agus. Due to Islamic populism benefiting Agus, people believed that Detik.com supported Islamic populism. However, from the media management perspective, Detik.com tried its best to be independent media (personal communication with Detik.com's Editor in Chief (Iin Yumiyanti), October 2018). By qualitatively analyzing the content of Detik.com on *aksi 212*, this study showed that Detik.com is relatively neutral to Islamic populism.

In the case of Metro TV, this study found the first news TV station in Indonesia was owned by Surya Paloh. Surya Paloh was also the founder and the leader of the NasDem Party. This study found that Metro TV was influenced by its owner. Metro TV and its proprietors, at the very least, promoted some common principles including pluralism, tolerance, multiculturalism, diversity, and nationalism. This study showed that Metro TV was less independent. NasDem supported Ahok in the 2017 Jakarta Governorial Election. Metro TV in the name of political pluralism also supported Ahok (personal communication with Metro TV's News Director (Don Bosco Selamun), November 2018). Based on the Metro TV's reportage on *aksi 212*, this study showed that Metro TV avoided covering *aksi 212*. Metro TV tended to cover *aksi 212* from a government perspective, not from Islamic populist actors' perspectives. This study also found Metro TV was beyond critical to Islamic populism. Metro TV was not only non-Islamic populism media but anti-Islamic populism media.

In terms of *Republika Daily*, this study found that *Republika Daily* was widely recognized as an Islamic daily owned by tycoon Erick Thohir and published by Mahaka Holding. *Republika Daily* was less independent of either its readers, the majority of whom were Muslim entities, the Islamic community, or the Islamic political parties, many of whom placed ads in the daily (personal communication with *Republika Daily*'s Editor in Chief (Irfan Junaidi), October 2018). Today's *Republika* journalists are proud of Erick Thohir and Mahaka for removing *Republika* from politics and putting it on a sound financial foundation. However, this study discovered that the newspaper has faced the consequences for this change toward commercialization, now replicating common opinion rather than questioning readers' or advertisers' perceived interests. This study showed that *Republika Daily* remained politically conservative. Based on the *Republika Daily*'s covering on *aksi 212*, this study found that *Republika Daily* tended to be very supportive or positive to Islamic populism. *Republika Daily* glorified *aksi 212* by publishing some photo galleries. Moreover, in January 2019, *Republika Daily* got the 212 Award from the Grand Reunion of the 212 Alumni Committee. *Republika Daily* was found as an Islamic populist media or pro-Islamic populism media.

The finding about *aksi 212* was summarized into (1) the media is the primary source of information, (2) the foundation date, (3) the establishment history, (4) number of audiences, (5) ultimate role in the public area, (6) ownership, (7) affiliation of ownership, (8) type of media, and (9) media ideology (see Table 1).

Table 1. The comparison of *aksi 212* mediatization

No.	Description	Detik.com	MetroTV	Republika Daily
1.	The media is the primary source of information	Mainly dotcom with YouTube as an alternative channel	Mainly audiovisual (television broadcasting), and dotcom and YouTube as alternative outlets	Mainly print paper with dotcom and YouTube as alternative outlets
2.	The founding date	July 9, 1998	November 25, 2020	January 4, 1993
3.	The establishment history	The initial online media	The initial 24 hours of news television	The initial Islamic print newspaper
4.	Number of audiences	70 million unique visitors; 1.31 million of Youtube's subscribers	3.18 million of Youtube's subscribers	160.000 exemplars (1999/2000); 1 million viewers; 7.31 thousand subscribers on Youtube
5.	Ultimate role in the public area	(1) To convey social and political awareness (2) To reveal previously	(1) The news information's integrity, speed, and veracity (2) Democracy wave witness	(1) moderate Islamic voice (2) Information pluralism (3) Islamic political voice funnel

		unfolded phenomenon (3) To discover people, government, and the rest of the globe	(3) The keeper of the state's legacy (4) Inspiration for creativity	(4) Islamic cosmopolitanism
6.	Ownership	Chairul Tanjung	Surya Paloh	Erick Thohir
7.	Affiliation of ownership	Businessman, former chair for the national economic committee, and former coordinating ministry of economics	Businessman, Leaders of National Democrat (Nasdem) Political Party	Businessman, Ministry of state enterprise
8.	Type of media	Partly independence	Interdependence	Interdependence
9.	Media ideology	Claimed as independent media, neutral for political participants	Diversity, multiculturalism, nationalism, pluralism, and tolerance	Stand up for Islamic entities, Islamic organizations, conservative Islamic politics, and Islamic political parties

Note: This table shows the comparison of media based on qualitative content analysis

This study also compared media publications about religious populism in Indonesia and India. The comparison finding between Indonesia and India was showed as (1) type of religious populism, (2) history of populism, (3) type of media reports, (4) populism representation, (5) the enemy term of populism, (6) role of media on populism, and (7) the media freedom (see Table 2).

Table 2. Comparison between religious populism in Indonesia and India

No	Concept	Indonesia	India
1.	Type of religious populism	Islamic Populism	Hinduism Populism
2.	History of populism	The appearance of Syarikat Islam Organization in 1912 as the metamorphosis of Syarikat Dagang Islam to face the dominance of Chinese business that was supported by Dutch colonial in 1905s	Mobilization of the people beyond castes and class against 'the establishment' by Gandhi and Singh in the 1960s
3.	Type of media reports	Three types of media: (1) Islamic populist media, (2) anti-Islamic populist media, (3) Neutral media	A single type of media: Hinduism populist media
4.	Populism	Majority identity as	Majority identity as

	Representation	populism and minority identities as ‘others’	populism and minority identities as ‘others’
5.	The enemy term of populism	Christian and ‘non pribumi’ as a cultural term	Muslim and Christian as cultural terms
6.	Role of media on populism	Media is a central factor for the movement of populist orientation	Media has been a central factor for the rise of populist orientation
7.	The media freedom	Media got press freedom to mediatize the support, the contra, and the neutral of populism	The media had no freedom to report ‘anti-Hinduism’ or ‘Muslim’

Note: This table describes the finding of comparison between Indonesia and India based on qualitative content analysis

This study showed seven findings (see Table 2). *Firstly*, both Indonesia and India raised religious populism from the majority identity. In Indonesia, Islamic populism comes from Muslim identity and in India, Hinduism populism comes from Hindu identity as the majority identity in both countries. *Secondly*, in terms of populism history, in Indonesia, Islamic populism was a response to the dominance of the Chinese in the economic sector. Like in India, as the initiators of Hinduism populism, Indira Gandhi and Chaudhuri Charan Singh crystallized the strong socio-economic overtone in the 1960s. *Thirdly*, this study found that in Indonesia, there are three types of media reports. The first type of media report is the Islamic populist media that support by covering the activities of Islamic populists: (1) pro Islamic populism, (2) anti-Islamic populism, and (3) neutral media. Meanwhile, in India, media were largely controlled by Hindu populism. This study found most of the media was pro-Hinduism populism. *Fourthly*, both in Indonesia dan India, religious populism comes from the majority identity. Islam is widely embraced by most Indonesian people and Hinduism is believed by the majority of Indians. Both considered the minority as the identity of ‘others’.

In Indonesian Islamic populism, *ulema* elites or Islamic organizations presented themselves as representative of the *umma*; the elites mobilized *umma*. In India, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) presents themselves as representative of the people. *Fifthly*, in Indonesia, the enemy term of religious populism was Christian and ‘nonpribumi’. In Indonesian Islamic populism, *ulema* elites or Islamic organizations presented themselves as representative of the *umma*; the elites mobilized *umma*. The term comes as a cultural term rather than a political term. It is similar to India, whereas Muslim and Christian were considered as cultural terms. BJP is a political party that nowadays employs Hindu populism in cultural terms to reach power in India. *Sixthly*, both in Indonesia and India, media is a central factor for the rise and the movement of religious populism. *Finally*, in terms of media freedom, Indonesian media enjoyed the freedom whether to cover or not about populism. In India, there is no press freedom about religious populism on media coverage. The Indian press had no choice except to support the Hindu populism of BJP or did omission (silent).

Discussion

Popular mobilization in the 2017 Jakarta Governorial Election showed Indonesia’s growing Islamic populism. Islamic populism historically was more used for economic issues. Since Reform Era, Islamic populism was more used for political issues. However,

the Islamic actors remained to employ elite versus *umma* discourse and identity politics in both economic populism and political populism. The populism in many parts of the world, either Islamic populism in Indonesia or Hindu populism in India, employs elite versus people discourse and identity politics (Barton et al., 2021; Yilmaz et al., 2021).

Aksi 212 and the 2017 Jakarta Governorial Election were found as a part of populism that was mediatized by three media (Detik.com, Metro TV, and Republika Daily). This finding confirmed that mediatization of populism was a part of the mediatization of politics (Schroeder, 2017). This finding also revealed that mediatization is a long-term trend of increasing media prominence, media have a direct or indirect impact on many aspects of society (Strömbäck, 2008). In terms of politics, the long-term process of political mediatization has increased the prominence of the media and its spill-over effects on political processes including players, organizations and institutions (Strömbäck & Esser, 2014).

Both *aksi 212* and 2017 Jakarta Governorial Election as populism activities were found embedded in news media coverage on Detik.com, Metro TV, and Republika Daily. This finding was similar to the previous study (Moffitt & Tormey, 2013) that emphasized that contemporary populism can not be separated from the media. It also confirmed the result of a previous study that showed media plays an important role in the success or failure of populist power (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017). Media was a domestic actor that caused populism to rise and develop. Populist parties might succeed in setting the agenda or in using the press agent for election purposes (Manucci, 2017). This study enriched the previous study that found news production is not only driven by politicians' interests and needs but also by the taste and preference of media consumers, which potentially shape populist political cultures (Strömbäck & Esser, 2014; Wettstein et al., 2018). The finding of current study was also like another previous study finding that populism is a communicative phenomenon and populist politics highly has a positive correlation with media populism or known as mediatized populism (Mazzoleni, 2014). As the result, the objectivity and impartiality of news media became less taken-for-granted (Sehl et al., 2022) when offering news production to mediatize about religious populism.

This study confirmed that the three observed media applied direct interaction in terms of the mediatization of populism to cover the interaction between populist actors and mainstream media (Manucci, 2017). Direct interactions occur if political players shape their messages as media conferences, release publications, party events, and interviews, using the media system including digital media (Güvercin, 2022) to disseminate their messages. This sort of interaction can provide three different results depending on the type of media response: legitimization or stigmatization of the political actor in the case of (1) positive or (2) negative reports, preservation of the status quo in the case of a (3) neutral report (Manucci, 2017). All findings on the observed media also confirmed the previous studies of media logic (Maurer et al., 2022) and political logic (Cushion et al., 2016; Strömbäck, 2011; Strömbäck & Esser, 2014).

This study showed the comparison of religious populism in Indonesia and India based on the mainstream media coverage. This finding confirmed that the mainstream media either online, audiovisual, or print media played a vital role in political mediatization based on religious populism (Hjarvard et al., 2012). At the same time, media coverage of religious populism developed political logic and media logic (Esser & Strömbäck, 2014). On religious populism, both political and media logic determined the agenda-setting of media to reproduce and disseminate their news value to influence public opinion (Coudry & Hepp, 2013).

The media played their own agenda based on the media logic to produce political logic. For example, Detik.com was founded with a focus on speed in mind (Anggoro, 2012), As a part of online media logic, Detik.com produced populist framing (Caiani & Carvalho, 2021) to attract readers. Meanwhile, Republika Daily produced political logic on their news to attract the loyal readers' sympathy. The news of Republika Daily reflected and affiliated to religious populism (Hadiz, 2016). In addition to Metro TV, their impartiality of religious populism lead and exhibit to a pluralism-based political logic (Ufen, 2019).

The current study confronted the previous study that digital media especially social media platforms were critical in disseminating populist messages to a huge number of individuals (Alonso-Muñoz & Casero-Ripollés, 2020). Mainstream media curated their news to specify their media or political logic. This curation was a part of new approach on gatekeeping. The idea of curated flows was the fundamental action of new media environment to produce, select, filter, annotate, or frame of content (Thorson & Wells, 2016). Mainstream media could not only use the classical gatekeeping but they must embrace the new approach of gatekeeping. Moreover, the media have the digital or online version of news delivery platform including hybrid media (Iosifidis & Wheeler, 2018).

Previous research revealed that new media focused on digital, internet, and social media were a fruitful ground for religious populism's voice (Siles et al., 2021; Solahudin & Fakhruroji, 2020). They provide the fertile ground for populists to develop certain symbols (Gerbaudo, 2018; Hopster, 2021). However, another previous study showed that the agenda setting of mainstream media steered the news of right-wing populism (Brown & Mondon, 2021). It means any media could mediatize any kind of populism including religious or right-wing populism (Barton et al., 2021).

The challenge for mainstream media for religious or right-wing populism was the media actor denied the agenda-setting power and the process of deflection (Brown & Mondon, 2021). The media actors may amplify their ideas and movements into different and alternative media. The mainstream media's coverage was limited and based on the agenda defining both political and media logic. Media players who were previously unnoticed by mainstream media selected alternative media for their populist audiences (Müller & Schulz, 2021).

Previous study raised normative question about the implication of populism in social media in the realm of democratic ethics and ideals (Nadler, 2019). Although, there is a guide for journalists to reduce the amplification of populism (Phillips, 2019), the trend of populism including religious populism increased in the middle of post-truth era (Fraune & Knodt, 2018). Moreover, populism in the post-truth era was a threat to democracy (Iosifidis & Wheeler, 2018). As the pre-eminent and expert in political communication, mass media had come increasingly to the fore (Schlesinger, 2020). Therefore, the responsibility of mainstream media as the fourth estate of democracy including in cyberspace (Tumber, 2010) was needed to control radical religious and right-wing populism. At the same time, mainstream media need to dismiss allegations as a result of being enslaved by elite consensus politics (Flew & Iosifidis, 2020). Mainstream media could be media infrastructure to flourish democratic societies (Nadler, 2019).

Conclusion

The political mediatization process affected how mainstream media strengthen religious populism. In the context of Indonesia and India, mainstream media covered

religious populism based on political logic and media logic. The coverage of mainstream media that gave a priority to political logic would gain the benefit of media logic. The mainstream media that used their own logic in their coverage were freely to mediatize, reproduce, and disseminate ideological content. The comparison between religious populism in Indonesia and India based on the media mainstream coverage used news value to determine content direction and coverage. The mainstream media played an important role in mediatized religious populism in broader society. Although there is no direct interaction with their audience, the agenda-setting of media still succeeds to develop a public opinion, especially in religious populism. At the same time, mainstream media as the fourth estate of democracy could control religious populism and become media infrastructure to flourish democratic societies. This study revealed the important role of mainstream media to mediatize religious populism. The future study could be a focus on the role of religious populism actors to build their agenda through mainstream media and alternative news and social media. Therefore, this study recommends how the actor of religious populism exploits the new media such as social media to expose their existence, activities, messages, and movement including the interaction with their followers especially in Indonesia context.

Conflict of Interest

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

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