

The Influence of Dedi Mulyadi's Populist Leadership Content on Civic Disposition

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ABSTRACT

Social media has become a central arena for political communication in the digital era, particularly in constructing leadership images, disseminating political messages, and fostering perceived closeness with the public. Populist leadership content distributed through digital platforms is typically characterized by personal, emotional, and cultural narratives, which have the potential to shape how young people think, behave, and perceive social reality as citizens. In this context, the populist leadership content of Dedi Mulyadi is noteworthy, as it consistently emphasizes proximity to the community, moral storytelling, and the use of strong local cultural symbols, especially those rooted in Sundanese identity. Such strategies are considered effective in building emotional bonds with audiences, particularly students. However, this populist approach also raises concerns, as it may prioritize emotional mobilization over the cultivation of reflective and substantive civic values. This study aims to analyze the influence of Dedi Mulyadi's populist leadership content on the formation of civic disposition among students of the Faculty of Social Sciences Education (FPIPS), Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia. Specifically, it examines students' perceptions of mediated intimacy, analyzes the effects of digital directness and performative authenticity on civic disposition, and formulates solutions to address the dominance of emotional appeals in populist content. Employing a quantitative correlational design with a survey method, the findings reveal a significant influence of populist leadership content on students' civic disposition, indicated by a t-value of 3.702 ($p < 0.05$). Furthermore, a positive correlation is identified ($r = 0.362$), suggesting a weak but meaningful relationship. Overall, leadership content that highlights social closeness, public problem-solving, and moral narratives contributes to shaping students' civic attitudes, while also underscoring the need to strengthen critical.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of digital communication technologies has brought about significant changes in the ways political leaders construct their public images, interact with citizens, and shape public opinion. Whereas political communication in the past relied largely on print media, television, and face-to-face meetings, social media has now become the primary arena through which leaders seek to build closeness with their constituents. This shift has not only transformed communication patterns but has also opened new avenues for the study of leadership, particularly in relation to populism and citizenship (Guess & Munger, 2023; Liu, 2021).

In the Indonesian context, this transformation is clearly reflected in the leadership practices of several public figures who strategically use social media to reinforce their populist images. One prominent example is Dedi Mulyadi, the Governor of West Java since February 2025, who has gained widespread recognition through his activities on YouTube and other social media platforms. He is often dubbed the “Content Governor” because nearly all of his activities—whether performed in his formal capacity as a public official or through spontaneous interactions with citizens—are packaged as visual content and disseminated to millions of viewers. By mid-2025, his official YouTube channel had reached nearly eight million subscribers, making him one of the local political figures with the largest digital reach in Indonesia.

In political studies, populism is often regarded as an ambivalent phenomenon. On the one hand, it can serve as a vehicle for democratization by providing space for the voices of marginalized groups to be heard (Berman, 2021; Guriev & Papaioannou, 2020; Ofstehage, Wolford, & Jr, 2022). On the other hand, populism is frequently viewed as problematic, as it tends to reduce complex issues to emotional and personalized narratives. In the digital era, however, populism has found a new medium that amplifies its appeal to the public. Through visually oriented content that is easily accessible and widely shareable, populist messages can reach broader audiences and shape collective perceptions more rapidly than conventional media (Hunger & Paxton, 2022; Moffitt, 2016).

As a cultural figure and politician, Dedi Mulyadi employs a distinctive style of communication that sets him apart from other politicians, who are often perceived as rigid and distant. When Kang Dedi speaks or engages in dialogue with ordinary citizens, he appears more approachable and personable. These interactions are frequently concluded by giving a small amount of money to the people he converses with, making the encounters more engaging and memorable. Even before the official campaign period, Dedi had already adopted this communicative approach. He claimed to have visited hundreds of villages over four years during his tenure as a member of the Indonesian House of Representatives (DPR RI) from the Gerindra Party (Alfikri, 2024). In each of his public appearances, he not only communicates verbally but also strategically employs body gestures, facial expressions, and sustained eye contact as forms of non-verbal rhetoric that reinforce his messages (Azis & Dermawan, 2025).

In the case of Dedi Mulyadi, the content he produces does not merely project the image of a modest leader but also reflects a strategy of cultural communication. The use of the Sundanese language, traditional attire, and local symbols reinforces a cultural identity that resonates strongly with the people of West Java. This strategy illustrates how local populism adapts to prevailing cultural values, thereby creating a stronger emotional bond between the leader and his constituents. Netizens’ comments referring to Dedi as “Bapak Aing” (literally, “my father”) provide evidence of how the symbolism constructed through digital content has been successfully internalized as part of the collective identity of West Javanese society (Moffitt, 2016). Dedi understands democracy in its substantive sense not as serving elite interests, but as being oriented toward the interests of the people. Accordingly, he seeks to directly experience and comprehend the problems faced by ordinary citizens and then engages in dialogue to address these issues, positioning himself as a democratic leader who prioritizes participatory problem-solving and responsiveness to public needs (Aji, 2025).

However, the issues at stake go beyond matters of image or communication strategy alone. A more fundamental question is: does Dedi Mulyadi's populist leadership content genuinely influence citizens' civic disposition? Civic disposition refers to a core dimension of civic education encompassing the attitudes, values, and habitual practices that encourage individuals to act as responsible, tolerant, critical, and public-minded citizens.

The Civic Education framework developed by (Quigley & Bahmueller, 1991) conceptualizes civic disposition as the affective dimension of citizenship. This dimension is concerned with the formation of attitudes, values, and habits that influence citizens' political behavior. Civic disposition encompasses attitudes such as respect for the rule of law, tolerance of diversity, commitment to social justice, and willingness to participate actively in public life. These dispositions are not innate; rather, they are the product of political socialization processes that occur across multiple arenas, including the family, schools, media, community organizations, and everyday life experiences (Castillo et al., 2021; Pasandaran, Lonto, Pangalila, & Barahama, 2018).

Civic disposition is reflected not only in formal behaviors such as exercising voting rights or obeying the law, but also in everyday actions that demonstrate social concern, solidarity, and personal responsibility. Citizens with a strong civic disposition tend to be more sensitive to public issues, more willing to engage in solving social problems, and more committed to placing the common good above personal or group interests. In this sense, civic disposition serves as a crucial indicator of the quality of a nation's democracy (Mazid, Komalasari, Abdulkarim, Rahmat, & Hasanah, 2024; Muettertities, 2021).

It is within this context that the relevance of the present study becomes more pronounced. If Dedi Mulyadi's populist leadership content is able to cultivate values such as empathy, solidarity, and social concern among its audiences, this phenomenon may be understood as a form of non-formal civic education occurring within digital spaces. University students, as one of the most active groups in accessing social media, are particularly likely to draw inspiration from such content. For students of Civic Education (PPKn) at Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (UPI), exposure to populist content may not only broaden their understanding of leadership practices but also strengthen the civic disposition required for their future roles as prospective teachers.

Accordingly, this study has a dual urgency: first, to understand the emerging dynamics of digital populism in Indonesia through the case of Dedi Mulyadi; and second, to examine how citizens' civic disposition is formed, strengthened, or potentially weakened through the consumption of digital content. By employing a quantitative approach, this research seeks to provide empirical evidence addressing whether Dedi Mulyadi's populist leadership content exerts a significant influence on civic disposition, particularly among university students as the nation's future generation.

2. METHODS

This study employs a quantitative approach, meaning that numerical data and statistical analyses are used to examine the relationships among the variables under investigation. As stated by Creswell (2014), quantitative research is an approach for testing objective theories by analyzing the relationships among variables. These variables can be measured using appropriate instruments, and statistical procedures are applied to analyze the resulting numerical data.

Data were collected using a self-administered closed-ended questionnaire, which was designed to enable respondents to select from predetermined response options and provide direct answers. The data obtained were quantitative in nature and related to students' perceptions of Dedi Mulyadi's leadership and its influence on their civic disposition. In measuring the questionnaire responses, this study employed a Likert scale to evaluate individuals' attitudes, perceptions, and responses within a social context. The Likert scale consisted of several items requiring respondents to indicate their level of agreement with each statement across four categories: strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree (Maya & Muhajirin, 2015).

Isyey Nur Cahyani, Cecep Darmawan, Leni Anggraeni/ The Influence Of Dedi Mulyadi's Populist Leadership Content On Civic Disposition

2.1 population and sample

A population refers to a set of entities or individuals that possess specific characteristics and attributes determined by the researcher to be analyzed and evaluated in order to draw relevant conclusions (Creswell, 2014). The population of this study consists of 1,322 undergraduate students of the Faculty of Social Sciences Education (FPIPS), Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, cohort of 2025. A subset of the population selected with particular characteristics and in a specified number is referred to as a sample. The sampling technique employed in this study follows Creswell (2014) notion of probability sampling, in which every member of the population has an equal chance of being selected as part of the sample. Specifically, this study uses Proportionate Stratified Random Sampling, as the population of Civic Education students at UPI is heterogeneous and therefore divided into proportional strata. Samples are drawn from each stratum to ensure that students from different cohorts are represented proportionally, and the selection within each stratum is conducted randomly. This procedure is intended to ensure that the resulting sample adequately represents the overall population. For example, if the survey is administered to 100 students in this study, the results may be generalized to other students within the same population. The researcher will employ a closed-ended questionnaire, in which respondents select a single answer from a set of alternatives predetermined by the researcher. Common forms of closed-ended questions include yes/no items, multiple-choice questions, and rating scales (Roopa & Rani, 2012). Closed-ended questionnaires enable respondents to answer efficiently and also facilitate data processing and analysis for the researcher (Yaddanapudi & Yaddanapuddi, 2019).

The sample size is determined using Slovin's formula, as presented below:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

n = the sample size,

N = the population size, and

e = the estimated margin of error (10%).

Based on this calculation, the required sample size is n = 93.

2.2 Data Analysis Techniques

At this stage, the researchers employ various techniques and statistical tests to analyze the data that have been collected. All procedures used in the data analysis process are described in detail, including data computation, classification, presentation, and interpretation. Data collection techniques constitute an essential and critical component of any research process. The data collection techniques employed in a study aim to obtain data, information, and empirical evidence that are reliable and trustworthy (Barlian, 2016). Accordingly, the data collection techniques to be used in this research are as follows:

1. Validity Test

The measurement instrument used in this study was a questionnaire. The validity test was conducted to ensure that the questionnaire appropriately measured the research variables and was capable of accurately obtaining, identifying, describing, exploring, and/or comparing the constructs under investigation. In addition, reliability testing was carried out to confirm that the questionnaire consistently measured the research variables.

Based on the results of the instrument validity testing using SPSS version 29, involving 8 items for variable X and 28 items for variable Y, all items of variable X were found to be valid. For variable Y, five items were identified as invalid, while the remaining items met the validity criteria and were therefore retained for further analysis.

2. Reliability Test

Instrument reliability refers to the degree of consistency with which a measurement tool yields stable and consistent results. A reliable instrument is expected to produce similar outcomes when administered to the same subjects at different times and under varying conditions. Since the instrument used in this study was a questionnaire, its reliability was examined using the Cronbach's Alpha model. The formula and its parameters are defined as follows:

$$r_{11} = \left(\frac{n}{n-1} \right) \left(1 - \frac{\sum \sigma_i^2}{\sigma_t^2} \right)$$

where:

r_{11} = the reliability coefficient sought,

n = the number of items tested,

$\sum \sigma_i^2$ = the sum of the variances of each item, and

σ_t^2 = the total variance.

The results of the reliability testing indicate that the 28 statements included in the questionnaire are reliable and fall within the category of high reliability, as the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient ranges between 0.70 and 0.90, in accordance with the criteria proposed.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The study on the influence of Dedi Mulyadi's content in shaping the civic disposition of students at the Faculty of Social Sciences Education, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, employed several data collection techniques to obtain accurate and comprehensive data. The techniques used in this research included documentation review and questionnaire distribution. On October 29, 2025, the researchers administered the questionnaire both online and offline to FPIPS UPI students of the 2025 cohort who served as the research subjects. The questionnaire enabled respondents to provide answers to a set of previously structured questions and facilitated the collection of quantitative data for subsequent statistical analysis.

The combination of these data collection techniques provided a holistic and comprehensive approach to investigating the influence of Dedi Mulyadi's content on students' civic disposition at UPI. In this section, the researchers present and discuss the research findings by integrating evidence derived from the different data sources. The results obtained are presented as follows.

3.1. Overview of Variable X

The frequency distribution of item X01, "I frequently watch/follow Dedi Mulyadi's content on social media (e.g., YouTube)", shows a relatively balanced response pattern among the 93 respondents. Each Likert-scale category was selected in nearly equal proportions: categories 1, 3, and 5 were chosen by 19 respondents (20.4%) each, while categories 2 and 4 were chosen by 18 respondents (19.4%) each. The cumulative percentage reached 60.2% at category 3, indicating that more than half of the respondents fell within the range of responses from 1 to 3 before gradually increasing to 100% at category 5. This even distribution suggests that item X01 captures respondents' attitudes proportionally, without a tendency toward any extreme category.

Table 1. The Frequency distribution of item X01

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1.00	19	20.4	20.4	20.4
	2.00	18	19.4	19.4	39.8
	3.00	19	20.4	20.4	60.2

4.00	18	19.4	19.4	79.6
5.00	19	20.4	20.4	100.0
Total	93	100.0	100.0	

The frequency distribution of item X02, *"Dedi Mulyadi's content portrays the leader's closeness to ordinary people"*, also demonstrates a highly balanced pattern. Categories 1, 3, and 5 were each selected by 19 respondents (20.4%), while categories 2 and 4 were each chosen by 18 respondents (19.4%). The cumulative percentage reached 60.2% at category 3. This uniform distribution indicates that item X02 effectively captures variations in respondents' perceptions without a strong inclination toward agreement or disagreement, thus functioning well as a measure within the studied variable.

Table 2. The Frequency distribution of item X02

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1.00	19	20.4	20.4	20.4
	2.00	18	19.4	19.4	39.8
	3.00	19	20.4	20.4	60.2
	4.00	18	19.4	19.4	79.6
	5.00	19	20.4	20.4	100.0
	Total	93	100.0	100.0	

For item X03, *"Dedi Mulyadi's content displays Sundanese cultural symbols that are easily understood by the public"*, responses were evenly distributed across the Likert scale. Categories 1, 3, and 5 were selected by 19 respondents (20.4%) each, while categories 2 and 4 were chosen by 18 respondents (19.4%). The cumulative percentage reached 60.2% at category 3. This consistent and balanced pattern indicates that item X03 proportionally captures respondents' perceptions without dominance in any single category, suggesting its effectiveness in measuring the intended aspect.

Table 3. The Frequency distribution of item X03

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1.00	19	20.4	20.4	20.4
	2.00	18	19.4	19.4	39.8
	3.00	19	20.4	20.4	60.2
	4.00	18	19.4	19.4	79.6
	5.00	19	20.4	20.4	100.0
	Total	93	100.0	100.0	

The frequency distribution of item X04, *"Dedi Mulyadi's content makes me feel that a leader should always be present among the people"*, reveals a very even response pattern. Categories 1, 3, and 5 were selected by 19 respondents (20.4%), whereas categories 2 and 4 were chosen by 18 respondents (19.4%). The cumulative percentage reached 60.2% at category 3. This uniform distribution implies that item X04 adequately reflects variations in respondents' perceptions without a dominant tendency toward any particular response.

Table 4. The Frequency distribution of item X04

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1.00	19	20.4	20.4	20.4
	2.00	18	19.4	19.4	39.8

3.00	19	20.4	20.4	60.2
4.00	18	19.4	19.4	79.6
5.00	19	20.4	20.4	100.0
Total	93	100.0	100.0	

Item X05, *"Dedi Mulyadi's content encourages me to trust leaders who are close to the people"*, also exhibits a balanced distribution of responses. Categories 1, 3, and 5 were each selected by 19 respondents (20.4%), while categories 2 and 4 were chosen by 18 respondents (19.4%). The cumulative percentage reached 60.2% at category 3. This proportional pattern suggests that item X05 effectively captures the diversity of respondents' attitudes toward the statement.

Table 5. The Frequency distribution of item X05

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1.00	19	20.4	20.4	20.4
2.00	18	19.4	19.4	39.8
3.00	19	20.4	20.4	60.2
4.00	18	19.4	19.4	79.6
5.00	19	20.4	20.4	100.0
Total	93	100.0	100.0	

The frequency distribution of item X06, *"Dedi Mulyadi's content inspires the belief that public problems can be solved quickly and simply"*, shows a similarly even pattern. Categories 1, 3, and 5 were selected by 19 respondents (20.4%), and categories 2 and 4 by 18 respondents (19.4%). The cumulative percentage reached 60.2% at category 3. This indicates that item X06 captures respondents' perceptions in a balanced manner, without a strong bias toward agreement or disagreement.

Table 6. The Frequency distribution of item X06

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1.00	19	20.4	20.4	20.4
2.00	18	19.4	19.4	39.8
3.00	19	20.4	20.4	60.2
4.00	18	19.4	19.4	79.6
5.00	19	20.4	20.4	100.0
Total	93	100.0	100.0	

For item X07, *"Dedi Mulyadi's content is easier to understand than political information from formal media"*, responses were evenly spread across all categories. Categories 1, 3, and 5 were chosen by 19 respondents (20.4%), while categories 2 and 4 were chosen by 18 respondents (19.4%). The cumulative percentage reached 60.2% at category 3. This consistent distribution suggests that item X07 effectively measures respondents' comparative perceptions of content accessibility.

Table 7. The Frequency distribution of item X07

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1.00	19	20.4	20.4	20.4
2.00	18	19.4	19.4	39.8
3.00	19	20.4	20.4	60.2
4.00	18	19.4	19.4	79.6
5.00	19	20.4	20.4	100.0

Total	93	100.0	100.0
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Item X08, *“Dedi Mulyadi’s content makes me more concerned about social issues around me”*, demonstrates a highly balanced response pattern. Categories 1, 3, and 5 were each selected by 19 respondents (20.4%), while categories 2 and 4 were chosen by 18 respondents (19.4%). The cumulative percentage reached 60.2% at category 3. This proportional distribution indicates that item X08 functions effectively in capturing variations in respondents’ social concern.

Table 8. The Frequency distribution of item X08

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1.00	19	20.4	20.4	20.4
2.00	18	19.4	19.4	39.8
3.00	19	20.4	20.4	60.2
4.00	18	19.4	19.4	79.6
5.00	19	20.4	20.4	100.0
Total	93	100.0	100.0	

The frequency distribution of item X09, *“I feel that his communication style appears friendly and not rigid”*, shows an evenly spread pattern among respondents. Categories 1, 3, and 5 were selected by 19 respondents (20.4%), whereas categories 2 and 4 were chosen by 18 respondents (19.4%). The cumulative percentage reached 60.2% at category 3. This even distribution suggests that item X09 captures diverse perceptions of communication style without dominance in any category.

Table 9. The Frequency distribution of item X09

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1.00	19	20.4	20.4	20.4
2.00	18	19.4	19.4	39.8
3.00	19	20.4	20.4	60.2
4.00	18	19.4	19.4	79.6
5.00	19	20.4	20.4	100.0
Total	93	100.0	100.0	

Finally, item X10, *“He shows an attitude that seems to directly understand the problems of ordinary people”*, also presents a balanced response distribution. Categories 1, 3, and 5 were each selected by 19 respondents (20.4%), while categories 2 and 4 were chosen by 18 respondents (19.4%). The cumulative percentage reached 60.2% at category 3. This consistent pattern indicates that item X10 effectively measures respondents’ perceptions regarding the leader’s direct engagement with public issues.

Table 10. The Frequency distribution of item X10

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1.00	19	20.4	20.4	20.4
2.00	18	19.4	19.4	39.8
3.00	19	20.4	20.4	60.2
4.00	18	19.4	19.4	79.6
5.00	19	20.4	20.4	100.0
Total	93	100.0	100.0	

The results of the descriptive analysis indicate that the distribution of students' responses across all items of variable X is highly even. Almost all items display a consistent pattern in which categories 1, 3, and 5 were each selected by 19 respondents (20.4%), while categories 2 and 4 were each chosen by 18 respondents (19.4%). This uniform pattern suggests that students did not exhibit extreme tendencies toward either strong agreement or strong disagreement, but rather demonstrated a relatively balanced range of perceptions.

Such a distribution pattern may be interpreted in at least two ways. First, respondents appear to have varying levels of exposure to Dedi Mulyadi's content. While some students frequently engage with his content, others may encounter it only indirectly or sporadically. This is evident, for instance, in item X01 ("I often watch/follow Dedi Mulyadi's content"), which shows no dominance of any particular category. Second, students' perceptions of populist leadership content are not homogeneous. Differences in social background, media preferences, political orientations, and levels of digital literacy are likely to contribute to diverse interpretations of the content.

Substantively, variable X encompasses four dimensions derived from Gerbaudo's (2018, 2024) framework: mediated intimacy, digital directness, performative authenticity, and emotional mobilization. These dimensions are reflected in students' responses to items concerning leaders' closeness to the people (X02), the presentation of Sundanese cultural symbols (X03), the leader's direct involvement in addressing public problems (X04 and X10), as well as inspirational appeals and the simplification of problem-solving (X06). Overall, the responses indicate that students recognize the performative characteristics embedded in the content, yet refrain from making extreme judgments, which may be understood as a form of attitudinal moderation toward public figures' content.

This pattern further suggests that students do not consume such content passively. Rather than accepting Dedi Mulyadi's content as an absolute representation of ideal leadership values, they appear to interpret it within a critical framework shaped by their academic training at FPIPS UPI, where broader social and political perspectives are emphasized.

In sum, the descriptive results for variable X reveal that although populist leadership content possesses strong visual and emotional appeal, students tend to maintain a balanced evaluative stance. This finding provides an important basis for understanding how variable X influences variable Y in the regression analysis presented in the subsequent section.

3.2 Overview of Variable Y (Students' Civic Disposition)

Similar to variable X, the distribution of responses for variable Y demonstrates a highly even pattern. This is evident across all items Y1 to Y21, where no single Likert category dominates. Such a response pattern indicates that the civic disposition of FPIPS UPI students is at a moderate level and does not reflect extreme self-assessments.

In this study, civic disposition encompasses multiple dimensions, including personal responsibility, integrity, law-abiding behavior, social engagement, ethical interaction, and civic awareness. These aspects are represented in items addressing discipline in adhering to rules (Y1), personal integrity (Y5), social participation (Y9–Y10), environmental concern (Y17), and tolerance for diversity (Y21).

This consistent distribution pattern yields several important interpretations. First, FPIPS students appear to possess a relatively stable level of civic disposition, yet they do not tend to evaluate themselves in either an overly positive or negative manner. This may reflect a healthy degree of self-reflection, whereby students avoid overclaiming or idealizing their own civic qualities. Second, the FPIPS educational environment, as an academic setting grounded in social sciences, likely contributes to shaping students' understanding of civic values. Nevertheless, discipline, integrity, and social participation seem to remain in a developmental phase, which is reasonable for first-year students of the 2025 cohort who are transitioning from secondary education to university life. Third, civic

disposition among the digital generation tends to be dynamic, shaped by the interaction between online and offline experiences. As much social activity and information is mediated through digital platforms, perceptions of social responsibility and public participation are also formed through media exposure, including content produced by public figures such as Dedi Mulyadi.

The moderate and evenly distributed responses suggest that students do not perceive their civic disposition as fully established, but rather as part of an ongoing process of personal development that evolves alongside their academic and social experiences. This pattern also helps explain why variable X accounts for only 13.1% of the variance in variable Y, indicating that students' civic disposition is influenced by multiple, multidimensional factors that cannot be reduced to a single variable, including formal education, organizational involvement, family background, and exposure to other sources of information.

3.3 Linearity Test

The linearity test was conducted to determine whether the relationship between the independent variable SUM_X and the dependent variable SUM_Y is linear. The assumption of linearity is essential because linear regression analysis requires a direct and consistent relationship between the independent and dependent variables. If the relationship between these variables is not linear, the resulting regression model may produce biased estimates, misleading interpretations, and invalid conclusions. Therefore, prior to performing further regression analysis, it is necessary to ensure that the pattern of association between the variables satisfies the linearity assumption.

Based on the ANOVA table, two main components are used to assess linearity, namely Linearity and Deviation from Linearity. The *Linearity* component tests whether there is a statistically significant linear relationship between SUM_X and SUM_Y, whereas the *Deviation from Linearity* component examines whether there is a significant departure from a linear pattern, indicating a non-linear relationship.

The results indicate that the *Linearity* component yields an F value of 14.556 with a significance level of $p < 0.001$. Since the p-value is smaller than 0.05, this finding demonstrates that the linear relationship between SUM_X and SUM_Y is statistically significant. In other words, there is strong evidence that the independent variable is linearly associated with the dependent variable.

Meanwhile, the *Deviation from Linearity* component shows an F value of 1.161 with a significance level of $p = 0.304$. Because this p-value is greater than 0.05, it indicates that there is no statistically significant deviation from linearity. This result suggests that the data do not exhibit a non-linear pattern and that the relationship between the variables can be considered adequately linear.

Table 11. ANOVA

Source of variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
SUM_Y * SUM_X					
Between Groups (Combined)	16143.617	36	448.434	1.533	.074
Linearity	4257.853	1	4257.853	14.556	<.001
Deviation from Linearity	11885.764	35	339.593	1.161	.304
Within Groups	16380.383	56	292.507		
Total	32524.000	92			

3.4 Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing in simple linear regression analysis is conducted to determine whether the independent variable SUM_X has a significant effect on the dependent variable SUM_Y. In the context of this study, SUM_X represents the total score of variable X, while SUM_Y represents the total score of variable Y. Accordingly, the test is performed to verify whether variations in SUM_X can significantly explain the variations observed in SUM_Y.

Isyau Nur Cahyani, Cecep Darmawan, Leni Anggraeni/ The Influence Of Dedi Mulyadi's Populist Leadership Content On Civic Disposition

The *Coefficients* table presents two main parameters estimated by the regression model, namely the constant (intercept) and the regression coefficient for SUM_X. First, the constant value of 43.409 indicates that when SUM_X is at zero or at its baseline level, SUM_Y is predicted to be approximately 43.409. Although, in practical terms, the literal interpretation of the intercept does not always carry substantive meaning, its inclusion remains essential as the baseline point for calculating predictions within the regression model.

Furthermore, the regression coefficient for SUM_X is 0.653 with a standard error of 0.176. This coefficient indicates that for every one-unit increase in SUM_X, SUM_Y is expected to increase by 0.653 units, assuming that other variables in the model (if any) are held constant. The positive coefficient suggests a direct relationship between SUM_X and SUM_Y, implying that higher scores on variable X are associated with higher scores on variable Y.

To determine whether this effect is statistically significant, the t-statistic is examined. As shown in the table, the t-value for SUM_X is 3.702, with a significance level of $p < 0.001$. This p-value, which is far below the conventional threshold of 0.05, indicates that the effect of SUM_X on SUM_Y is statistically significant. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis (H_1), stating that there is a positive and significant effect of SUM_X on SUM_Y, is accepted, while the null hypothesis (H_0), which posits no significant effect, is rejected. In addition, the Standardized Coefficient (Beta) value of 0.362 reflects the relative contribution of SUM_X to variations in SUM_Y on a standardized scale. This beta coefficient suggests that SUM_X makes a meaningful contribution to changes in SUM_Y, although it is not the sole factor influencing the dependent variable.

Overall, the results of the hypothesis testing indicate that the simple linear regression model developed in this study is valid and capable of explaining the linear relationship between variable X and variable Y. The positive and significant effect observed strengthens the argument that changes in variable X have direct implications for increases in the value of variable Y.

Table 12. Hypothesis Testing

Model	Variabel	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig
	(Constant)	43.409	5.598		7.754	<.001
	SUM_X	.653	.176	.362	3.702	<.001

3.5 correlation analysis

Furthermore, the table shows that the correlation coefficient between the predictor variable (SUM_X) and the dependent variable (SUM_Y) is $R = 0.362$, indicating a positive relationship that falls within the weak category. The R Square value of 0.131 implies that the regression model explains approximately 13.1% of the variance in SUM_Y through SUM_X. In other words, the remaining 86.9% of the variance is attributable to other factors not included in this research model.

The Adjusted R Square value of 0.121 reflects the model's goodness of fit after accounting for the number of predictors. Its proximity to the R Square value suggests that the model does not suffer from overfitting.

Meanwhile, the Std. Error of the Estimate of 17.62433 represents the dispersion of the residuals or the magnitude of the model's prediction error. The smaller this value, the better the model's predictive accuracy; however, in this case, the relatively large value indicates that the prediction error remains considerable. Overall, the results presented in the table indicate that SUM_X has a limited predictive capability for explaining variations in SUM_Y.

Table 13. Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.362 ^a	.131	.121	17.62433

a. Predictors: (Constant), SUM_X
b. Dependent Variable: SUM_Y

3.6. Relationship Between Descriptive Results and the Inferential Stage

The descriptive results for both variables serve as an essential foundation for the inferential analysis conducted in the subsequent stage. The relatively even distribution of responses indicates that the data are not distorted by extreme bias, thereby providing favorable conditions for regression analysis and hypothesis testing. With such a distribution pattern, the linear relationship between X and Y identified in the regression analysis can be interpreted as arising from natural variation within the population of FPIPS students.

Furthermore, as both variables X and Y exhibit a fairly uniform diversity of perceptions, the simple regression model demonstrating a positive and significant effect can be understood as a reflection of the general pattern in how students respond to digital content and civic values. In other words, although the contribution of variable X to variable Y is not substantial, the relationship remains meaningful and theoretically relevant.

Thus, the descriptive analysis offers an important preliminary overview of how students interpret populist leadership content and how they develop their civic disposition. This understanding provides a basis for further discussion of the mechanisms of influence and their relevance within the context of citizenship education in the digital era.

3.7. Interpretation of R and R Square Values

The Model Summary reports an R value of 0.362, indicating a positive relationship between variables X and Y. Although this value falls within the category of a weak correlation, in the context of social research—particularly studies involving behavior, perceptions, and civic values—such a relationship should not be underestimated. Human attitudes and behaviors are multidimensional phenomena shaped by numerous interacting factors. Therefore, a correlation coefficient of 0.362 provides reasonably strong evidence that variable X plays a role in the formation of students' civic disposition.

The R Square value of 0.131 indicates that 13.1% of the variance in students' civic disposition can be explained by variable X, while the remaining 86.9% is attributable to other factors not included in the model. This finding should not be interpreted as a weakness of the model; rather, it underscores the complexity of civic disposition as a socio-psychological construct influenced by multiple determinants, such as family education, organizational experiences, academic curriculum, exposure to alternative media, and students' broader social environments.

In social and behavioral research, R Square values in the range of 10–20% are common, particularly when a regression model includes only a single independent variable. Accordingly, the value of 13.1% provides sufficient empirical grounds to conclude that populist leadership content constitutes one of the factors influencing students' civic disposition, although it is not the dominant determinant.

Moreover, the Adjusted R Square value of 0.121 suggests that the model does not suffer from overestimation and remains stable after adjustment for sample size. The close correspondence between R Square and Adjusted R Square indicates that the regression model fits the data well and is not merely an artifact of sample size.

3.8. Discussion of Research Findings in Light of Theory

The findings of this study, which indicate a positive and significant effect of Dedi Mulyadi's populist leadership content on the civic disposition of students at FPIPS UPI, provide substantial analytical space to examine the construction of digital populism and its implications for the formation of civic character. With a regression coefficient of $B = 0.653$ and a significance level of $p < 0.001$, this study confirms that digital populist content, although performative and mediated in nature, retains the capacity to influence the orientations, attitudes, and moral dispositions of young citizens, as suggested by a number of previous studies in the fields of political communication, media studies, and civic engagement.

These findings are consistent with Gerbaudo's (2018) argument that digital populism operates through the construction of *mediated intimacy*, namely an emotional closeness forged between leaders and followers via digital media. In the context of this study, Dedi Mulyadi's content portrays strong emotional bonds through narratives about the lives of ordinary people, on-the-ground problem solving, and representations of everyday social realities.

Such intimacy functions not only as a tool of political communication but also as a source of moral identification for students. According to Gerbaudo (2024), social media enables leaders to present their personal and human sides more intensively than traditional media. This is consistent with the response patterns of students, who tend to perceive such content as reflecting the leader's closeness to the people, as captured in several items of variable X. This process of emotional identification reinforces the view that civic disposition is not formed solely through normative instruction, but also through exposure to concrete examples that are perceived as relevant and authentic.

The linkage between the empirical findings and theories of digital populism is further strengthened by the concept of *digital directness* articulated by Gerbaudo (2018). The direct delivery of messages through digital platforms allows leaders to shape public perceptions rapidly and effectively. In Dedi Mulyadi's case, his straightforward, visual, and easily understood communication style leads students to perceive that social problems can be addressed practically through immediate action. This perception is closely related to civic disposition, particularly in terms of responsibility, social concern, and adherence to social norms.

Contemporary theories of political communication also support these findings. Casero-Ripolles (2020) reports that simple and direct political messaging via social media enhances emotional political engagement among younger generations. Similarly, Vaccari & Valeriani (2018) demonstrate that exposure to digital political content can increase intentions for public participation and awareness of social issues, although the magnitude of the effect varies depending on the intensity of media consumption.

The concept of performative authenticity proposed by Moffitt (2016) is highly relevant for understanding how students interpret a leader's authenticity in digital content. Moffitt argues that contemporary populism relies on constructed performativity, namely the staging of actions, symbols, and narratives designed to appear authentic. In this study, such performativity is evident in the way Dedi Mulyadi presents himself as a hands-on leader, engages directly with ordinary people, and conveys empathy through gestures and facial expressions.

Enli (2025) likewise emphasizes that digital authenticity is often the result of strategic construction, yet it can still exert a powerful psychological impact on audiences. This perspective helps explain why students tend to respond positively to items of variable X that are associated with perceptions of the leader's authenticity.

From the perspective of civic disposition, this performative authenticity provides a moral reference that can shape how students interpret integrity, responsibility, and social commitment. Theocharis, Moor, & Deth, (2021) demonstrate that exposure to political content containing representations of moral values can enhance civic dispositions, particularly among young people who

are in a critical phase of moral identity formation. This is consistent with the findings of the present study, which indicate that FPIPS UPI students tend to evaluate positively content that displays empathy and alignment with marginalized communities.

The fourth element in Gerbaudo's framework, namely emotional mobilization, makes a substantial contribution to understanding the mechanisms through which populist content exerts its influence. Gerbaudo (2018) explains that digital populism relies on the management of emotions to activate audiences, rather than on rational argumentation or complex policy deliberation. Content that features emotional narratives, social injustice, or structural poverty has the capacity to evoke empathy and moral impulses to care and engage.

Benner & Segerberg (2023), in their theory of connective action, argue that emotions constitute a key driving force of digital participation, particularly when messages are conveyed through personalized narratives. In this study, students reported responding to empathy-evoking content with heightened social awareness and a stronger willingness to engage in community activities, as reflected in several items of variable Y related to social participation and environmental concern.

The regression results, which yield an R Square value of 0.131, further indicate that although populist content has a statistically significant effect, its contribution to civic disposition is relatively modest compared to other determinants. This finding is consistent with the literature suggesting that civic disposition is a multidimensional construct shaped by a range of factors, including formal education, family environment, organizational experiences, cultural background, and digital literacy (Dahlgren, 2010; Kahne & Westheimer, 2006). Accordingly, the influence of populist content should be understood as one among many interrelated factors that operate simultaneously in the formation of students' civic dispositions.

In the context of civic education, these findings confirm Dahlgren's (2010) view that digital media function as a new arena for civic learning, where individuals acquire understandings of civic values and identities. However, this learning process is not passive; students actively process, select, and interpret information based on their existing value frameworks. This explains why the distribution of responses for variables X and Y appears relatively even: students recognize the potential positive aspects of populist content while at the same time maintaining a critical stance shaped by their education and social experiences.

The findings are also consistent with Jenkins (2020) concept of participatory culture, which suggests that the digital generation does not merely consume content but also produces meaning through social interaction and personal reflection. In this study, students do not simply accept the values presented in Dedi Mulyadi's content; rather, they integrate them into their own frameworks of civic understanding. This is reflected in the items of variable Y that indicate awareness of personal responsibility, integrity, social concern, and commitment to the rule of law.

Although the influence of populist content is statistically significant, this study also reveals potential problems that have been discussed in the literature. Moffitt (2016) warns that populism that relies heavily on performativity may lead to the simplification of complex social realities. Mudde & Kaltwasser (2017) likewise emphasize that populism can foster polarization and reinforce binary views between "the people" and "the elite." In the student context, this tendency may encourage the interpretation of social issues through an emotional lens that pays insufficient attention to structural dynamics. To some extent, the potential for polarization and social conformity also emerges in the analysis of students' responses in this study.

Based on the overall theoretical review and empirical findings, it can be concluded that digital populist leadership content plays an important yet limited role in shaping students' civic disposition. On the one hand, populist content can serve as an effective agent of value socialization through emotional closeness, direct communication, performative authenticity, and emotional mobilization. On

the other hand, it also has inherent limitations stemming from the nature of populism itself, which often emphasizes simplification, dramatization, and the personalization of public issues. Therefore, interpretations of the influence of populist content must take into account the broader social environment, including formal education, media literacy, and students' participatory experiences in the public sphere (Schulz, 2024).

Accordingly, this study makes a significant contribution to understanding the dynamics between digital populism and civic disposition. The findings not only enrich the theoretical discourse on digital populism but also provide direction for the development of civic education strategies that are more adaptive to the evolving digital media landscape, enabling students to critically process public content and to develop mature civic dispositions in responding to the social challenges of the information age.

3.9. Research Limitations

This study has several limitations that need to be acknowledged to ensure that the findings are interpreted proportionally and to provide direction for future research. Limitations in social research should not be viewed merely as methodological weaknesses, but as part of the epistemological reality that social phenomena—including the influence of populist leadership content on civic disposition—are complex, dynamic, and shaped by multidimensional variables. In this study, limitations arise from the research design, the characteristics of the respondents, data collection techniques, the statistical analysis model, and the broader socio-cultural context in which the phenomenon is situated. Recognizing these constraints is essential so that the results are not overgeneralized and remain within an appropriate scientific scope.

First, a key limitation lies in the relatively homogeneous sample. This study involved only 93 undergraduate students from the Faculty of Social Sciences Education (FPIPS), Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, cohort of 2025. This narrow scope limits the generalizability of the findings to the wider student population at UPI, let alone to students at other universities. FPIPS students are embedded in a specific academic culture oriented toward social, political, and civic studies, which may heighten their sensitivity to political and social content, including populist leadership narratives. Consequently, their responses may differ from those of students in the natural sciences, arts, or health faculties. Moreover, as first-year students, the 2025 cohort is in a transitional phase of academic, social, and digital identity formation. Their patterns of political content consumption may differ from those of senior students with broader organizational experience and political exposure. Thus, the limited and homogeneous sample constrains the generalization of the findings to more diverse student groups.

Second, this study relies on a Likert-scale questionnaire, which carries inherent limitations. Such instruments depend on respondents' subjective perceptions and are unable to capture more nuanced psychological dimensions, such as motivation, meaning-making, or cognitive processes involved when students are exposed to populist content. There is also the potential for social desirability bias, whereby respondents may choose answers perceived as morally appropriate or aligned with prevailing campus norms, particularly for items related to integrity, law obedience, social participation, and civic ethics. Furthermore, the highly even distribution of responses across items suggests a tendency toward central tendency bias, in which respondents avoid extreme options (strongly agree or strongly disagree). This pattern may prevent the data from fully reflecting respondents' true attitudes and reduce the instrument's sensitivity in detecting sharper variations in civic orientations.

Third, the study adopts a quantitative approach using a simple regression model, which frames the relationship between variables within a limited linear causal perspective. Simple regression examines only the influence of variable X on variable Y, without accounting for other factors that may function as mediators or moderators. Civic disposition is a multidimensional construct shaped by various influences, including family education, organizational experience, peer environments, digital literacy, political affiliation, community engagement, and internal psychological factors such as

empathy, locus of control, and social motivation. Therefore, the finding that variable X explains 13.1% of the variance in variable Y not only indicates a modest effect but also reflects the limited capacity of a simple regression model to capture the complexity of such multidimensional relationships. The use of a single-model design may result in omitted variable bias, whereby relevant unmeasured variables influence the observed relationship and, consequently, the interpretation of the results.

Fourth, this study does not take into account the duration of exposure, the quality of interaction, or the patterns of respondents' digital media consumption with respect to Dedi Mulyadi's content. Although the questionnaire items address viewing frequency, the study does not measure the intensity of engagement, such as viewing duration, the depth of comments read, the context of YouTube's algorithmic recommendations, or respondents' motivations for accessing the content. Previous studies suggest that digital media effects are strongly shaped by how individuals interact with media, not merely by exposure intensity. The impact of populist content on civic disposition may differ between students who actively engage with the content (e.g., commenting or participating in discussions) and those who only encounter short clips through algorithmic feeds. Consequently, the absence of detailed data on media consumption patterns constrains the interpretation of the observed effects.

Fifth, this study does not examine the temporal context or the evolving dynamics of populist content. Digital political content is highly sensitive to momentum, emerging issues, and shifts in communication strategies by public figures. Dedi Mulyadi's content in a given year may differ substantially from that in subsequent years in terms of narrative, framing, and posting intensity. Therefore, this study offers only a static snapshot within a specific period and does not capture changes in students' perceptions over time. This is particularly important because civic disposition develops through continuous value internalization rather than instant formation. Without a longitudinal design, the study cannot determine whether the observed influence is short-term or enduring.

Finally, the study is limited by the temporal salience of the data collection period. Conducted over a relatively short timeframe, students' responses may have been influenced by specific social or political issues that were salient or viral at the time. Public sentiment toward political figures can shift rapidly, thereby reshaping perceptions from one moment to another. Accordingly, the findings cannot be assumed to represent long-term or stable perceptions of Dedi Mulyadi's content.

Overall, these limitations do not diminish the academic value of the study; rather, they provide a more realistic foundation for interpreting the findings. Acknowledging these constraints is essential so that future research may adopt more comprehensive designs, including longitudinal approaches, mixed methods, analyses of mediating and moderating variables, and broader, more diverse samples. Through such efforts, future studies on the influence of populist leadership content on civic disposition may yield deeper, more accurate, and more contextually relevant insights in light of the evolving digital media landscape and the civic development of younger generations.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussion of the study, the following conclusions are drawn to address the research questions:

The obtained t-value of 3.702 indicates that the effect is statistically significant. With a significance level far below the threshold of 0.05, this result confirms the alternative hypothesis that populist leadership content exerts a significant influence on students' civic disposition. This finding strengthens the argument that digital content embedding social closeness, public problem-solving, moral narratives, and emotional mobilization possesses the capacity to be internalized into young citizens' patterns of thinking and civic attitudes.

The Model Summary reports an R value of 0.362, indicating a positive relationship between variables X and Y. Although this value falls within the category of a weak correlation, in the context of

social research—particularly studies involving behavior, perceptions, and civic values—it remains meaningful. Accordingly, a correlation of 0.362 provides sufficient indication that variable X plays a role in shaping students' civic disposition.

The presence of a positive relationship between populist leadership content and civic disposition suggests that increases in students' exposure to and acceptance of such content tend to be accompanied by improvements in their civic disposition. Although the strength of the relationship is relatively weak, it is still meaningful in social research, given that civic disposition is a complex construct influenced by multiple interacting factors. Therefore, populist leadership content can be understood as one of the contributing factors in the process of forming students' civic dispositions, albeit not the dominant determinant.

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