

Influence of Communication Using WhatsApp on Cohesiveness of Citra Kinaraya Cooperative Members in Central Java

Pengaruh Komunikasi Menggunakan WhatsApp terhadap Kekompakan Anggota Koperasi Citra Kinaraya di Jawa Tengah

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Abstract - Information and communication technology is advancing rapidly. As technology advances, social media also grows and develops. WhatsApp is one of the most widely used social media. This study aims to analyse the factors that influence the use of WhatsApp social media as a communication medium on the cohesiveness of Citra Kinaraya Cooperative members. The research was conducted in December - January, which took place at the Citra Kinaraya Cooperative, Mlatiharjo, Demak. The research method used was a survey with a quantitative approach. The number of respondents was 95 cooperative members—data collection methods by interview, observation, and literature review. The data analysis used in this study used multiple linear regression analysis. This study shows that members of the Citra Kinaraya cooperative have characteristics: aged 41-60 years, the majority are male, have a high school education level, and the length of membership in the cooperative is 1-4 years. The results showed that frequency, duration, attention, age, and education level simultaneously influenced group cohesiveness. On the use of WhatsApp, as seen from frequency, attention duration, age, and education level, only attention partially affects group cohesiveness.

Keywords: Cooperative, cohesiveness, social media, WhatsApp

Abstrak - Teknologi informasi dan komunikasi berkembang pesat. Seiring kemajuan teknologi, media sosial pun tumbuh dan berkembang. WhatsApp adalah salah satu media sosial yang paling banyak digunakan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi penggunaan media sosial WhatsApp sebagai media komunikasi terhadap kekompakan anggota Koperasi Citra Kinaraya. Penelitian dilakukan pada bulan Desember – Januari yang bertempat di Koperasi Citra Kinaraya, Mlatiharjo, Demak. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah survei dengan pendekatan kuantitatif. Jumlah responden adalah 95 anggota koperasi, metode pengumpulan data dengan wawancara, observasi, dan studi literatur. Analisis data yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini menggunakan analisis regresi linier berganda. Kajian ini menunjukkan bahwa anggota koperasi Citra Kinaraya memiliki karakteristik: berusia 41-60 tahun, mayoritas berjenis kelamin laki-laki, memiliki tingkat pendidikan SMA, dan lama keanggotaan dalam koperasi adalah 1-4 tahun. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa frekuensi, durasi, perhatian, usia, dan tingkat pendidikan secara simultan berpengaruh terhadap kohesivitas kelompok. Pada penggunaan WhatsApp dilihat dari frekuensi, durasi perhatian, usia, dan tingkat pendidikan, hanya perhatian yang mempengaruhi kohesivitas kelompok secara parsial.

Kata kunci: Koperasi, kekompakan, media sosial, WhatsApp

INTRODUCTION

Cooperatives play a pivotal role in driving the economic activities of communities, particularly in Indonesia, where their presence is growing significantly. According to data from the Indonesian Statistics Agency (BPS), the number of active cooperatives in Indonesia reached 127,846 units in

2021, with a business volume of IDR 182.35 trillion. This marks a 0.56% increase compared to the previous year. The government's target for 2024 is to establish 500 modern cooperative units, with development efforts including the Farmer and Fisher Corporation (KPN) program and various policies aimed at optimizing cooperative growth. This reflects

the belief that cooperatives can substantially improve the community's economy.

While government policies and external support are crucial, the internal dynamics within cooperatives are equally important for their development. These internal aspects are significantly shaped by communication processes among cooperative members. Cooperative interactions encompass various levels of communication, including interpersonal, group, and organizational communication, which together contribute to the cohesiveness and productivity of the group. Research by Setiawati & Riyono (2018) and Maulanasari (2022) indicates that effective and continuous communication can foster a sense of unity among members, which in turn boosts the spirit of cooperation and group productivity.

In the context of digital transformation, communication within cooperatives is increasingly facilitated by digital platforms. According to Cahyono et al. (2023), the digitalization of cooperatives enhances modernity and development, offering new opportunities for members to strengthen communication through technological tools like social media. Among these tools, WhatsApp has emerged as a popular platform in Indonesia due to its user-friendly interface. Within cooperative groups, WhatsApp enables the exchange of information, coordination, and collaboration among members, thereby supporting group cohesiveness (Das & Pradip, 2021). This digital communication is vital in maintaining harmony and fostering effective relationships between members (Yohana & Wulandari, 2014).

However, despite the potential benefits of using WhatsApp for communication, some challenges persist. Issues like limited internet access among members, misunderstandings due to the complexity of written messages, and varying interpretations of communication can disrupt the smooth flow of information. Miscommunications can lead to conflicts and hinder the establishment of a cohesive and collaborative environment (Meilinda, 2018). This is especially relevant for agricultural cooperatives like Citra Kinaraya in Gajah District, Demak Regency, Central Java, whose members are dispersed across different regions, necessitating efficient communication to maintain unity.

The primary focus of this study is to explore how communication through WhatsApp affects group

cohesiveness within cooperatives, specifically examining the type of communication (e.g., interpersonal communication within chat groups, group communication dynamics) and the nature of its effects. These effects include cognitive impacts (e.g., changes in members' understanding or knowledge about cooperative activities), affective impacts (e.g., shifts in members' attitudes and emotions towards the group), and behavioral impacts (e.g., changes in members' participation and engagement levels). Given the increasing reliance on social media for communication in various sectors, including agriculture, it is crucial to understand how such platforms shape the interactions and cohesiveness of cooperative groups. This study aims to fill this gap by analyzing the nuances of WhatsApp communication and its implications for group dynamics within the cooperative context.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study was conducted in January - February 2023. The research was structured as quantitative research by analysing primary data. Primary data in this study is obtained directly from the research location related to frequency, duration, attention, age and education level.

The study adopted a survey method. Data were collected using interviews, observation and documentation. The population of this study were 156 members of the Citra Kinaraya Demak cooperative whose members were spread from Demak, Purwokerto, and Sragen. The sampling method was *purposive*, with the sample criteria being respondents who were in the Demak area, because Demak had the largest number of members in the Cooperative, namely 95 members of the Citra Kinaraya Cooperative. The data were analysed using multiple linear regression analysis with the following formula.

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_5 + \varepsilon$$

where Y is cohesiveness, β_0 is constant, X_i for $i=1, 2, \dots, 5$ is frequency, duration, attention, age and education, respectively, $\beta_1 \dots \beta_5$ is the regression coefficient of respective variables, and ε error term

The statistical Hypothesis for the model analysis is formulated as follows.

$$H_0: \beta_1 = \beta_2 = \beta_3 = \beta_4 = \beta_5 = 0$$

H_1 : H_0 is false

Following the statement of Sukestiyarno and Agoestanto (2017), a significance value of $F < 0.05$ means that there is an simultaneous influence of the independent variables on the dependent variable. Following the statement of Darma (2021), when the significance value of $t < 0.05$ in the test, the independent variable influences the dependent variable.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overview of the study site

Citra Kinaraya Cooperative is located in Mlatiharjo village, Gajah sub-district, Demak district. The cooperative engages in the agricultural sector, which focuses on producing rice. This cooperative was established because of the initiative of several people in Mlatiharjo, Demak, who complained about some of the problems that exist in agriculture, such as falling selling prices during harvest, pests attack and plant diseases, the length of the marketing chain, not knowing the market segment so that farmers usually sell their crops to intermediaries at prices according to the wishes of the intermediaries, not to mention when the flood disaster comes.

The capital obtained by Citra Kinaraya Cooperative comes from internal members in the form of mandatory deposits of SHKJG (Certificate of Right and Obligation to Sell Grain) of 12 million. The cooperative also facilitates farmers who want to buy SHKJG with an *off-taker* KUR loan from BNI bank with the cooperative as an affiliate/insurer. Farmers are willing to invest in SHKJG because farmers need the certainty of the availability of working capital for planting and certainty of purchasing their crops at a profitable or at least not detrimental to farmers. With the right and obligation to sell at a particular minimum price of IDR 5,000/kg GKP (Harvested Dry Grain). Farmers are protected from the risk of GKP prices at harvest time, which can sometimes drop below Rp 3,000/kg.

Respondent characteristics

Table 1 shows the personal characteristics of cooperative members. The characteristics include age, gender, education level, and the duration of participating in the cooperative.

It can be seen that the age grouping refers to Hurlock, who divides the age category into three categories, namely early adulthood (18-40 years),

middle adulthood (41-60 years), and old adulthood (>60 years). The middle age group dominates members of the Citra Kinaraya Cooperative. The middle age group is an adaptive, productive group that easily absorbs innovations in cooperative development.

Table 1 Characteristics of cooperative members

| Characteristics | Number | Proportion |
|----------------------------|--------|------------|
| Age | | |
| Early Adults (18-40) | 25 | 26,3% |
| Middle Adult (41-60) | 56 | 58,9% |
| Late Adult (>60) | 14 | 14,8% |
| Gender | | |
| Female | 89 | 93,6% |
| Male | 6 | 6,4% |
| Formal Education | | |
| Elementary school | 30 | 31,5% |
| Junior high school | 7 | 7,4% |
| Senior high school | 34 | 35,8% |
| University | 24 | 25,3% |
| Duration of being a member | | |
| < 4 Years | 43 | 45,2% |
| 5 - 10 Years | 19 | 2,0% |
| > 10 Years | 33 | 34,7% |

Male members dominate the cooperative. The difference is very contrasting with a total of 94 male members and six female members. The gap is caused by the construction of a society in that women are only used as subjects and men are placed as objects who play an important role in making every policy and regulation. However, the cooperative is open to accepting women members and involving them in cooperative activities. Cooperative membership respects gender equality and does not discriminate against men or women.

The members mostly have graduated from senior high school and university level. The level of education with the least amount is junior high school. Undergraduate and diploma levels and elementary school levels then followed them. Members with the lowest level of education do not need to worry about their abilities because the cooperative often holds non-formal education such as training, seminars, and field practices to improve members' skills and knowledge. This follows Bariqi (2018), which states that training for members aims to increase the

knowledge and abilities of cooperative members to support the performance of members to carry out their duties and obligations.

Most cooperative members have only been joining for one to four years, totalling 43 people. Members with more than ten years of membership were the founders, administrators and early members when the cooperative was just established. These members pioneered the cooperative from scratch until now. This year, there has been a very significant increase in the number of cooperative members. This indicates that the community has widely understood the impact and benefits of joining the cooperative.

Factors Affecting the Cohesiveness

Table 2 shows the statistical indicators related to econometric analysis that test the determinants of cohesion among cooperative members. For the coefficient of determination test, it was found that the result of the coefficient of determination value was 0.782 or 78.2%. This means that the ability of the independent variables, which include frequency, duration, and attention, simultaneously has an influence on the dependent variable (cohesiveness) of 78.2%, while other variables besides the independent variables in the study explain the rest. According to Reavindo (2020), the coefficient of determination ranges from 0 to 1. The coefficient of determination value close to 1 indicates a more substantial influence between the independent and dependent variables.

Table 2. Results of F- and t-tests

| Model | F | Sig. |
|----------------|--------|-------|
| Regression | 10.721 | 0,000 |
| t-test | | |
| Model | t | Sig. |
| Constant | 1,179 | 0,242 |
| Frequency (X1) | -0,245 | 0,807 |
| Duration (X2) | 1,394 | 0,167 |
| Attention (X3) | 5,894 | 0,000 |
| Age (X4) | -0,930 | 0,355 |
| Education (X5) | 0,730 | 0,468 |

Source: primary data analysis

The results of the multiple linear regression equation in the study are as follows:

$$Y = 18.608 + 0.358X_1 + 1.706X_2 + 1.825X_3 - 1.170X_4 + 0.935X_5$$

Based on the test results, a significance value of 0.000 was obtained. A value of 0.000 is smaller than

0.05. This means that the independent variables consisting of frequency (X1), duration (X2), attention (X3), age (X4) and education level (X5) simultaneously have a real influence on the dependent variable, namely cohesiveness (Y). As the F-test shows a high significance level, the test proceeds with the individual test. Based on the output results of the t-test, frequency, duration, age and education level have no partial influence on cohesiveness. Because the significance value > 0.05. Attention is a variable that has a partial influence because the significance value <0.05. When the significance value <0.05, the independent variable's effect is partially on the dependent variable (H₁ accepted). Based on the F- and t-tests, the only factor that significantly impacts the cohesion among cooperative members is the X₃. The regression coefficient value for the attention variable (X3) is positive at 1.285. The positive sign means that there is a unidirectional influence between the independent variable and the dependent variable. This shows that if attention (X3) increases by 1 unit, it will increase cohesiveness by 1.285, assuming other variables do not change. Attention can increase group cohesiveness. Like the conditions in the field, members are always interested in opening messages when a notification comes in. Members always feel interested when there is information in pictures and videos or just witty jokes or invitations to copy in the group. Members feel the group is flexible because the content concerns education and witty jokes. This is the attraction for members to always read and respond to the group and get to know each other.

Attention to WhatsApp means how much attention research respondents pay to the contents of messages on WhatsApp. The results show that attention partially influences the cohesiveness of cooperative members. The contents of the messages on WhatsApp attract the attention of cooperative members to open and read these messages. The management always *updates* information about agriculture to the WhatsApp group. In addition, discussions of member meeting schedules, training schedules, visit schedules, and planting schedules are also conveyed to the group. The results of several questions regarding attention to the use of WhatsApp, namely whether cooperative members open cooperative groups to find information, how much interest in opening information and reading the contents of messages, and how cooperative members respond to the contents of messages in the group. The

average respondent answered in the frequent category. The impact of attention on cohesiveness is also following research conducted by Rezeki (2022) that the attention or attention of members to the contents of messages in WhatsApp significantly influences group members' cohesiveness.

Other factors are insignificant—many possible factors affecting the insignificance. The frequency of WhatsApp utilization here means how often research respondents use the WhatsApp application within one week as a medium for disseminating information and communication. In theory, the higher the frequency of WhatsApp use, the more effectiveness of communication can be achieved, and when the frequency of WhatsApp utilization they do increases, it will affect their knowledge of information that is useful for the farming business they are running (Ninditha, 2019). However, conditions in the field show that it is not the frequency of WhatsApp use that causes them to increase their knowledge of information. However, training activities are carried out in cooperatives and intensive face-to-face interactions when in cooperatives. On average, cooperative members use WhatsApp in one week, answering 12-15 times.

The duration of WhatsApp utilization is defined as how often research respondents use the WhatsApp application in terms of hours per day. The higher the duration of WhatsApp use, the higher the intensity of interaction between fellow members (Ninditha, 2019). However, the situation in the field shows that the high duration of WhatsApp usage does not mean always sending messages with fellow members but also viewing *stories* of fellow WhatsApp users, communicating with family or just making WhatsApp statuses. Members use WhatsApp in a day, and the average respondent answered 2-3 hours per day.

The more mature a person is, the more social relations have been formed to encourage cohesiveness and collectivism in the group (Nababan, 2022). However, this condition is different from observations in the field in that those members who are young and old feel the sense of continuing to be part of the cooperative. This is due to the various benefits provided by cooperatives to support the welfare of their families as well as other factors such as price certainty, availability of seeds from cooperatives, agricultural insurance and other factors.

The theory put forward by Fern is that higher levels of education have good communication skills and tend to be more compliant with group norms than someone with a low education level. Based on the conditions in the field, it can be concluded that a person's level of education has nothing to do with someone willing and able to survive with a group, someone comfortable communicating with fellow members. However, a person has the same interest in a group, and other things influence this, such as welfare, benefits and satisfaction obtained by members in a group.

CONCLUSION AND SUGESSTION

Based on the results of data analysis and discussion, factors that influence the use of WhatsApp consist of frequency, duration, attention, age and education level. Attention has a partial influence on member cohesiveness, while frequency, duration, age and education level do not have a partial influence on cohesiveness. The majority of cooperative members use WhatsApp 10-15 times a week. The duration of WhatsApp usage is 2-3 hours in one day.

It is recommended that communication using social media can be encouraged to all cooperative members to increase the solidity. Solid membership among cooperative members is expected to increase the cooperative performance. It should be noted that all member using the social media are subject agreed rules in the communication process.

Implications

This study provides essential insights into the role of communication technology, specifically WhatsApp, in enhancing the cohesiveness of cooperative members in Indonesia. The findings suggest that policymakers and cooperative managers should consider using social media as a tool to strengthen interactions and collaboration among members. Cooperative managers can use WhatsApp as the primary platform for disseminating important information, organizing schedules, and facilitating efficient discussions. The study also highlights that attention to WhatsApp content is a crucial factor influencing group cohesiveness. Therefore, relevant and engaging messages should be consistently delivered to keep members connected and actively involved. Furthermore, these findings are relevant for

social media platforms to enhance features that support group communication for agribusiness or cooperative-based communities.

Limitations

Despite its significant findings, this study has certain limitations. First, the data were obtained from a limited sample of only 95 members of the Citra Kinaraya Cooperative, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to other cooperatives in Indonesia. Second, the study's cross-sectional design limits the ability to draw causal conclusions about the relationships between the variables analyzed. Third, the study relies on self-reported data, which increases the risk of measurement bias. Additionally, this study focuses solely on WhatsApp as a communication medium, without considering other digital platforms that cooperative members might use. Future research should consider using larger and more diverse samples, adopting longitudinal designs, and incorporating objective indicators to validate the findings of this study.

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