

Trump: Guilty or Victim of the Crisis?

The Use of Social Media by Leaders in Times of Crisis
(2020–21)

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Introduction

The United States House Select Committee investigating the Capitol attack on January 6, 2021, in the USA has published its final report on December 22, 2022.

The 845-page report alleges Donald Trump, and his allies are guilty of crimes against the United States for their role in fomenting the Capitol riot and attempting to disrupt the orderly transition of power. The January 6 committee has referred Donald Trump to the justice department to face criminal charges, accusing the former president of fomenting an insurrection and conspiring against the government over his attempt to subvert the outcome of the 2020 election, and the attack on the US Capitol Hill.

For the first time in American history, Congress has referred a case against a former president.

When the post-election protests are analysed within the situational crisis communication theory framework, results similar to the committee's report are obtained.

The January 6 committee's report suggests that Donald J. Trump deliberately spread false allegations of election fraud. When the Facebook posts shared by Trump after the election are analysed within the framework of the situational crisis communication theory (SCCT), it is seen that most of Trump's posts evaluated the election process within the 'intentional cluster' and suggested that there is an organisational conspiracy against him. In this context, Trump interacts with folks mostly by using the 'victimage and scapegoat' crisis response strategies, accusing others in the process, and claiming that he is the victim.

On the other hand, Joe Biden did not respond to Trump's election fraud claims and protests in different states from the post-election period until January 6 and mostly shared information about his plans during the presidential process.



Donald J. Trump



7 November 2020 · 🌐

I WON THIS ELECTION, BY A LOT!

Abstract

In the study, Trump's Facebook posts were examined within the framework of the role of social media in crisis communication, the role of leadership concept, and how he managed the crisis according to the situational crisis communication theory. This study's conceptual basis is the situational crisis communication theory. The crisis, which is the focus of the study, was limited to the post-election process, which started with the allegations of Donald Trump alleged fraud in the election, after the US presidential elections that were held on November 3, 2020, leading to the dynamics that resulted in the Capitol protests on January

6. First, the concept of crisis was examined within the context of the situational crisis communication theory, and the significance of social media in crisis communication was highlighted. For the purpose of this study, the leaders' official Facebook sites were scrutinised using quantitative content analysis. 150 Facebook posts shared by Joe Biden and 241 Facebook posts shared by Donald J. Trump were dissected within the parameters of the study. This approach uncovered the crisis clusters through which the leaders evaluated the crisis and the kind of crisis response strategy they adopted.

2020 United States Presidential Election Crisis

In the United States, presidential elections were held on November 3, 2020, between candidates Donald Trump of the Republican Party and Joe Biden of the Democratic Party. As a result of these elections, widespread demonstrations took place across the country, and in some locations, these demonstrations turned into riots. In the final round of voting, former US Vice President Joe Biden overtook the 45th US President Donald Trump, with 81.3 million votes (51.3%) to 74.2 million votes (46.7%). Voting ended in the westernmost state of Hawaii, which cast its four votes for the Democratic Party candidate. As a result, Biden scored 306 votes, and the incumbent President Donald Trump – 232 (Presidential election results: Biden wins 2020). To win the presidential election, the winner needs to collect at least 270 electoral votes (Board, 2022).

Joe Biden received more than 81 million votes, surpassing the previous record of 69.8 million votes established by former President Barack Obama. The 2020 presidential election received more votes than any previous election in US history, demonstrating the largest voter turnout in more than a century (NPR, President-elect Joe Biden reaches 80 million votes in a year of record turnout). 66.5% of eligible voters participated in the election, the most since 1908 (Greve & Singh, 2020).

The US Electoral College meeting on December 14 voted for the president in accordance with the expressed will of the voters in each state, confirming Biden's victory (Sonam and Shet, 2020). Trump refused to admit defeat, claimed

that the election was falsified, and that he had been the victim of electoral fraud (Board, 2022).

Meanwhile, Trump supporters, notably the Proud Boys, demanded fair elections on the streets of towns and state capitals. In a few locations (including Washington, DC) in November and December 2020, protests involved the Proud Boys and several likeminded groups who refused to admit President Trump's loss. These protests resulted in street brawls, scuffles with police, and numerous detentions (Landay & Gardner, 2020).

The United States Congress convened on January 6 to complete the handover of power. Senators and representatives were required to ratify the electoral vote according to which Joe Biden, a Democrat, was elected the new president of the United States. The incumbent president, Donald Trump, did not acknowledge the election results, in that he was endorsed by thousands of people who assembled in Washington for the "Save America" event. People gathered at the Capitol walls and demanded that the results be deemed illegitimate. President Trump himself stated that the election was the most fraudulent in American history (Vazquez & Judd, 2020).

During his speech, the outgoing president urged rally attendees to advance to Congress (Petras et al., 2021). Trump's followers engaged in direct action by breaching the police barrier and entering Capitol Hill. In a short period of time, the demonstrators were able to gain access

to the building, the Senate conference chamber, and a number of the offices of high-ranking politicians. Inside, there were several conflicts between protestors and police enforcement personnel, which resulted in multiple injuries and the death of 5 people (Petras et al., 2021).

Additional police forces arrived at the Capitol to quell the protest and vacate the building. Moreover, by order of Trump, the National Guard forces were brought into Washington, which eventually allowed to resolve the situation and push the protestors away from the Capitol (Singman, 2021).

The fact is that the president at the rally called on his supporters "to help the Republicans defend fair elections. When the activists began to storm the Capitol, Trump almost immediately asked them to "protest peacefully and respect the work of the police". The current incident has drawn serious criticism of Trump, with opponents of the

head of state accusing him of inciting unrest. Biden reacted to the actions of his opponent's associates more harshly. He called for an immediate end to the "siege of the Capitol" (Beth LeBlanc, 2021).

Other prominent representatives of the Democratic Party also compared what was happening with a coup and demanded the introduction of the National Guard forces to stabilize the situation, which, in fact, the president did. In addition, the DC authorities have imposed a curfew beginning at 6 p.m. local time, pledging to jail any violators (Singman, 2021).

The takeover of the Capitol was, by American standards, an unparalleled occurrence. "Attacks on the land of the complex have occurred previously, but no one has witnessed such a large-scale assault for more than two millennia" - the last occasion Capitol Hill was occupied was in 1814 by British troops (Holpuch, 2021).



US President Donald Trump's supporters gather outside the Capitol building in Washington D.C., United States on January 06, 2021. Pro-Trump rioters stormed the US Capitol as lawmakers were set to sign off Wednesday on President-elect Joe Biden's electoral victory in what was supposed to be a routine process headed to Inauguration Day. (Tayfun Coşkun - Anadolu Agency)

The January 6 Committee and the Allegations Against Trump

The United States House Select Committee was formed in June 2021 to investigate the Capitol attack. Over 18 months, the committee held 10 public hearings and interviewed more than 1,000 witnesses, including Trump administration officials and staff, Trump family members, Capitol police officers, rioters, militia members, and more (Guardian News & Media, 2022).

The January 6 Committee presented an 845-page report on December 22, explaining the allegations against Trump.

According to the report, Trump purposely disseminated false allegations of fraud related to the 2020 presidential election in order to aid his effort to overturn the election and for purposes of soliciting contributions. The report also states that Trump pressed Vice President Mike Pence to refuse to count the electoral votes at the January 6th session of Congress, improperly pressured ministry officials to misrepresent; and the information that he called the Capitol on January 6th, provoking the people with baseless allegations (Feuer, 2022).

Theoretical Framework of SCCT and Examination of crisis communication on Social Media

Theoretical Framework

The process of creating good communication is one of the most critical activities in crisis management. In this setting, assuming that a leader exists with effective communication within the context of the impact of the definition and concept of leadership on the public, it reveals that leaders play a critical role in the crisis process. Citizens demand excellent process management from the person they regard as a leader due to the nature of the crisis, especially in a social catastrophe that impacts broad groups of people. In this process, the leader, which in terms of the word implies directing, obtains prominence and exists as a person to whom people go for assistance in order to get out of this chaotic era that has come suddenly. The efficacy of leaders in the crisis management process is a highly essential aspect in the crisis response process, according to studies done within this framework (Liu et al., 2020).

Because it is informed by a range of disciplines, including public relations, risk management, communication, mass media, and business management, crisis management is classified as an interdisciplinary phenomenon in terms of study and practice. Crises, according to Weick, are "extreme conditions that jeopardize organisations and their goals while also diminishing profitability" (1988, p. 305).

The extent of the threat posed by crises, as well as the tactics created by organisations in response to crises, impact organisational strategy. The political crisis may be characterized as representatives of authority and politicians feeling impotent in the face of an unforeseen problem impacting the society they rule (Weick, 1988).

W. Timothy Coombs (2006) defined crisis as a process in which an unpredictable event that threatens stakeholders' expectations can have negative consequences by negatively affecting the organisation's performance. Coombs' (1995) situational crisis communication theory (SCCT) affords the theoretical basis for this examine and is constructed at the attribution concept posited through Benoit (1997). The concept of attribution is defined as the understanding of why unexpected events occur and cause challenges for institutions. Citations are, in essence, recognition at the records across the reasons of sure occurrences or the causal linkages made for the mounted ties among the activities in question (Coombs, 2004).

In other words, the citations are about whether the event that caused the crisis was internal or external to the organisation. According to the attribution theory, the concept of stability explains whether the cause of the crisis persists and changes within the process, regarding the way in which the events that cause the crisis occur. The control-

lability of the crisis is related to the evaluation of the ability and capacity of the main actor of the crisis to control this crisis process (Coombs, 2007).

In this framework, the crisis type matrix was created by Coombs' method to crisis communication (Coombs, 1995).

There are two conditions based on the matrix—compatibility of the matrix's dimensions with the attribution theory that feeds the crisis theory, and design of the dimensions in such a manner that distinct crisis typologies can evolve without entirely excluding one another. Internal-external and intentionality-unintentionality are two aspects that will satisfy with the stated requirements. The condition of intentionality and unintentionality; relates to the manageability component of attribution theory, whereas the internal and external distinction indicates the core of the responsibility principle in attribution theory (Coombs, 1995).

"SCCT has three key elements. These elements are crisis type, crisis response strategy decision and crisis response strategy implementation for the current situation" (Coombs, 2008, p. 243). "The main focus of the theory is the type of crisis. Because there is a parallelism between the type of crisis and the level of responsibility that the stakeholders put on the organisations. The extent to which the reputation of the person exposed to the crisis may be damaged can only be estimated by examining or analysing the degree of responsibility placed on this organisation by the stakeholders during a crisis. The negative impact that the crisis process can have on the reputation of this organisation is a very important element in deciding what kind of response option to choose" (Coombs, 2008, p. 243).

In this context, Coombs (2004) identified three crisis cluster types, or general types of crises, in his situational crisis communication theory research: the victim crisis cluster, the accidental crisis cluster, and the intentional crisis cluster.

Crisis Clusters

The Victim Cluster

In crises where the institution is seen as a victim, very little responsibility falls on the institution through its stakeholders. The organisation is visible through the stakeholders because the victim of the crisis is no longer the creator. Such crises cannot be managed through organisation. In the cluster of victims, the organisation is not always held responsible for the crisis; rather, it is portrayed as a sufferer. Natural disasters, rumours, violent acts of violence that may occur unexpectedly among employees, enter this group (Coombs, 2015).

The Accidental Crisis Cluster

"The crisis that the organisation is responsible for unintentional is developed in exchange for an action that the organisation did not do knowingly and willingly" (Coombs, 2008, p. 244). The crisis may be attributed to this group only to a very limited extent. Thus, the crisis is the result of occurrences that are beyond the organisation's control, such as accidents caused by technological faults, product damage caused by technical flaws, and obstacles (Indiraswari et al., 2019).

The Intentional Crisis Cluster

In such crises for which the organisation is responsible, the reason for the action that led to the event that caused the crisis originates from the organisation. In these crisis types, the organization knowingly placed people at risk, took inappropriate actions or violated a law/regulation. This set shows that accidents due to human error, and organisational errors, such as product damage and organisational inaccuracies due to human error, are thought to be intentional (Indiraswari et al., 2019).

Crisis Response Strategies

The Situational Crisis Communication Model includes four possible response categories for the crisis response strategies identified by Coombs (2010). Crisis response methods are classified into four broad categories in the framework of situational crisis communication theory, three of which are primary (deny crisis response strategy, diminish crisis response strategy, and rebuilding crisis response strategy) and one secondary (bolstering strategy), which contains sub strategies (Coombs, 2010).

Numerous studies have supported and extended understanding of the SCCT and the response strategies that influence crisis outcomes. The definitions of these strategies are provided below.

Deny Crisis Response Strategies

Within the scope of the denying approach, the organisation attempts to demonstrate that it has no responsibility for the situation that has occurred. The denial technique

includes sub strategies such as attacking the accuser (blaming the individual or group that blames the organisation for the issue), denial (denying the existence of the crisis), and scapegoat someone else (holding people or an authority outside the organisation responsible for the crisis) (Coombs, 2010; Holladay, 2010).

Attack the Accuser

It is a response strategy in which the organisation or person declared responsible for the crisis does not accept this responsibility and counterattacks against those who claim it (Indiraswari et al., 2019).

Denial

Denial is a response strategy in which it is asserted that there is no crisis or that one is not responsible for the problem. Denial can also refer to the act of denying responsibility for the situation (Indiraswari et al., 2019).

Scapegoat

The organisation, which is shown as responsible for the crisis in this strategy, does not accept responsibility within the scope of the institution and places the blame on individuals or groups from within or outside the institution. If the person whom the organisation shows as responsible for the crisis is an employee of the institution, he will be punished in a way that can be seen by the public. If the person or group declared a scapegoat by the institution is outside the organisation, it is emphasised that the main culprit is not the institution, and that the crisis has arisen due to the activities of these individuals or groups (Indiraswari et al., 2019).

Diminish Strategy

The diminish approach seeks to lessen the organisation's culpability for the crisis and/or the severity of the crisis by claiming that the problem was accidental (excuse strategy) and/or lowering public perception of the crisis's impact (justification strategy) (Holladay, 2010).

Excuse

Crisis supervisors reduce organisational duty through denying the aim to damage the agency or incapacity to manipulate a crisis-triggering occurrence (Indiraswari et al., 2019).

Justification

The managers of the organisation that is the subject of the crisis aim to minimize the overall damage caused by the crisis. In this kind of situation, it is a matter of re-creating the steps to be taken on how to manage the crisis (Indiras-

wari et al., 2019).

Rebuilding Strategy

The rebuilding strategy, which comprises compensation (to recompense those who have been harmed by the crisis) and apology (to apologize by accepting full responsibility for the disaster), tries to positively modify stakeholders' impressions of the organisation in crisis circumstances (Holladay, 2010).

Compensation

In the event of a crisis, the managers of the organisation, who are the main actors of the crisis, offer things such as gifts and money to the victims of the crisis (Indiraswari et al., 2019).

Apology

In the event of a crisis, the managers of the organisation that is the subject of the crisis take full responsibility for the emergence of a crisis and apologize to the stakeholders affected by the catastrophe (Indiraswari et al., 2019).

Bolstering Crisis Response Strategy

The fourth category of crisis intervention strategy proposed by the situational crisis communication theory to defend reputation is the bolstering approach. The bolstering approach aims to disseminate positive information about the organisation by focusing on crisis victims (compassion method) and/or reminding of previous good actions (reminder strategy). In addition, in this crisis response method approach, there is a situation that the organisation, which is the main actor of the crisis, is also victimized as a result of the crisis (Holladay, 2010).

Reminder

In this approach, the corporation, that is the concern of the crisis, reminds its stakeholders of the good, successful performance that the organisation has finished within side the past (Indiraswari et al., 2019).

Innovation

The managers of crises are responsible for praising stakeholders and/or reminding them of the company's successful performance (Indiraswari et al., 2019).

Victimage

Stakeholders are reminded by crisis managers that the company itself is also affected by the ongoing crisis scenario (Indiraswari et al., 2019).

Implicit Denial

Given that the primary objective of crisis communication is to maintain and enhance company reputation, it is crucial to execute tactics suited to varying levels of responsibility allocation (Coombs, 2007). The concept of 'implicit', which is a psychological term, can be defined as ignoring the crisis and thus responding to the crisis. According to Dorpat (1983), denial may be both implicit and explicit, with implicit denial occurring far more often than the

comparatively primitive protective behaviour of public denial. It is a crisis intervention approach devised by the crisis manager within the context of crisis communication, in which messages are sent outside the crisis situation without addressing crisis. In this method, the issue is ignored by communicating other messages. According to Coombs, since every crisis is unique, it is vital to create and implement a response strategy tailored to these characteristics (Coombs, 2007).

Examination of crisis communication on social media

When the new media and conventional media are compared with regard to the degree of crisis communication, it is evident that social media has not altered the primary principles of communication that are to be carried out during the crisis (Coombs, 2014). According to White (2012), the use of social media in the process of crisis communication is highly significant since it allows for the sharing of information during times of crisis and makes the crisis communication organisation more efficient. If the institutions that have been the focus of the dilemma are able to make good use of social networking sites, they will be able to associate with their respective target groups in a way that is both simpler and more efficient, which will allow them to win back the confidence they have lost.

In crisis communication research, there is a tendency to analyse and discuss social media as a homogeneous and

general phenomenon (Haelelin and Kaplan, 2010). Thus, it is erroneous to regard web 2.0 technologies as a homogeneous mass within the scope of the characteristics and purposes of social media platforms in the process of crisis communication. This is due to the rapid evolution of internet technologies (Eriksson and Olsson, 2016).

The use of social media as a communication tool in a crisis was also seen after the American elections in 2020. The demonstrations, which started with Donald Trump's accusations of massive fraud burst into a crisis on November 3, 2020, after the American presidential elections. Throughout the rise and continuance of this crisis, the leaders used social media to disseminate their views and exert control over the situation (Mason et al., 2020). Donald Trump and Joe Biden, who engaged in the election, used Facebook as a tool and were crisis leaders at this time.

Political speech on social media

The primary purpose of politics and political careers is to secure one's place in political life for an extended length of time and to amass political power. To somehow be recognized is the key requirement for entering the political landscape and maintaining a representation there. It is possible to be perceived appropriately and in the manner that one desires with the help of effective communication management (Steffens et al., 2021). To be regarded in the political arena, to organise people on their side, and to diminish popular support by degrading the opponent are the goals that politicians strive to achieve through their speeches. It gives an advantage over competitors by effectively man-

aging communication in the following ways: monitoring public expectations; enhancing the effectiveness and durability of political messages sent; influencing opinion leaders; developing feedback mechanisms; and boosting the capacity to set the agenda (Wilson, 2005).

In this regard, the proliferation of new communication channels and social media contributes to an improvement in the interaction between political actors and members of society by making it possible for political actors to connect and engage with a more extensive audience (De Gregorio and Goanta, 2022).

In this context, social media has been an important promotional tool for Donald J. Trump and Joe Biden, who were candidates in the 2020 US Presidential Elections, to reach citizens. Between April 9 and October 25, 2020, Donald Trump allocated 47.30 percent of total ad spend, or \$201,460,242 of a total ad spend of \$426,263,134, to social media. Joe Biden, on the other hand, used 29.40 percent, that is, 166,118,753 dollars of the total advertising expenditure of 564,755,962 dollars, for advertisements in digital media (Project, 2020).

The involvement of politicians on social media has sparked many academic and journalistic scrutiny. While politicians have traditionally used their accounts to interact with voters or political opponents, they increasingly use their platforms to promote the interests of their supporters and communicate with their supporters through these platforms (De Gregorio and Goanta, 2022). According to Bajar (2017), in this way, the themes presented by the leaders to their followers through social media during the political speech process gain meaning in the political communication process. These themes can be summarized as:

Personal Life

Social media posts by leaders about their special interests and leisure activities can be categorised under the heading "Personal Life". In a biography, credentials, academic titles, etc., personal experiences may be presented alongside official activity (Bajar, 2017).

Election Campaigns and Political Advertisements

This category contains entries on campaign escapes. It also contains words that may inspire followers to vote for politicians, as well as political techniques such as the repeated use of slogans (Bajar, 2017).

Self-Descriptions

These include characterizations that have the potential to assist a person enhance their image and/or character. Posts contain events that improve rendering. An illustration of this might be an article or video that discusses the leaders in question and focuses on them directly (Bajar, 2017).

Experience in Government Service

It encompasses the individual's past as well as their present work in the legislative, executive, and judicial departments of the government. It also encompasses situations in which a politician's previous or current government title,

such as Mayor, Senator, or Secretary, is tied to their name in some capacity (Bajar, 2017).

Advocacies and Electoral Platforms

These are postings about an advocacy or platform that speculate when it may be possible to put those ideas into action after being elected to government positions. In addition, it illustrates personal activities and commitments currently underway and a proposal for their continuation in the post-election future (Bajar, 2017).

Quasi-Official Functions

It includes submissions proving their attendance at events organised by national or municipal governments, in addition to entries demonstrating their presence at other community events such as graduations and fiestas. During the course of their involvement, they were invited to serve as honoured guests or speakers. Only those individuals who already have a government position are eligible to apply for it (Bajar, 2017).

Political Positions

It is made up of pieces that reflect perspectives from a variety of sources ranging from the local to the international level. These concerns may be related to a pressing problem that affects certain persons or groups, goods, international events, or other topics that are of widespread interest (Bajar, 2017).

Entertainment

These postings are intended to provide the viewers with enjoyment, entertainment, and/or amusement. There are entries here that include hilarious movies and images, regardless of whether or not they are related to politics (Bajar, 2017).

Purpose of Study and research questions

All in this frame, in the study, firstly, the concept of crisis was examined within the framework of situational crisis communication theory, and the situation of the leadership concept in the crisis process and the role of social media in crisis communication were emphasised. The crisis, which is the subject of the study, was limited to the period, which started with the allegations of Donald Trump's that massive election fraud occurred after the November 3, 2020 American Presidential election, and especially to the process that culminated in the Capitol protests on January 6th. The aim of the study is to examine how the two leaders who received the most votes after the 2020 US Presidential Elections, Joe Biden and Donald Trump, evaluated the crisis over Facebook, according to Coombs' Situational Crisis Communication Model. In the study, the official Facebook pages of the leaders were taken as a sample as the area of crisis analysis. The purpose of choosing Facebook as the basis of the study is that as of January 2022, Facebook is the most popular social media platform with 179.65 million

monthly active users in the United States and has low a negative opinion of Facebook in the United States as of November 2021 (Published by Statista Research Department, 2022; Published by L. Medero, 2022). In particular, with the platform providing users with the opportunity to give feedback with emojis, it will be possible to handle more concretely how users react to the interaction of leaders during the crisis. In this framework, the post-election Facebook posts of Joe Biden and Donald J. Trump will be examined in the context of situational crisis communication theory by content analysis method.

The research questions of the research are as follows:

RQ1: What crisis cluster do the Facebook posts of leaders Trump and Biden represent?

RQ2: What types of crisis response strategies did political leaders Trump and Biden primary use during the 2020-21 post-election crisis?

Method

Content analysis is a scientific method for investigating social reality by categorising, converting to numbers, and inferring the message contained in spoken, written, and other materials in terms of meaning and/or grammar. In the context of quantitative content analysis, the definition of content analysis includes breaking communication material into units, allocating each unit to a category, and keeping a scoreboard for each category (Rourke and Anderson, 2004).

In this context, quantitative content analysis method was used in the study. The crisis, which is the subject of the study, was restricted to the period, which started with the allegation of Donald Trump's alleged fraud in the election after the November 3, 2020 American Presidential election, and especially to the process that culminated in the protests in the Capitol on January 6th. The study's scope was limited to those aspects of the crisis.

The code book of the study was inspired by 2 studies which are Indiraswari, Kriyantono and Pia (2019) and Bajar (2017).

Data Collection

The data of the study are limited between November 4, 2020, and January 9, 2021, for Joe Biden, and between November 4, 2020, and January 6, 2021, because Donald Trump's Facebook account was suspended on January 6, 2021. In the study, 241 posts shared by Donald Trump and 150 posts shared by Joe Biden will be taken as data. The data was manually taken from the official Facebook accounts of Joe Biden and Donald Trump. Data on Donald Trump was collected on March 13, 2022, and data on Joe Biden on March 17, 2022.

Coding Sheets

Coding sheets of this study gathered data of: a) the leader who shared the post. b) the date of the Facebook posts. c) analysis of post content within the framework of type of

crises d) total number of reactions, shares, and comments per post. e) number of different emoji replies to posts f) themes of posts

Coding Procedure

For the purpose of validating subjectively coded data in the field of mass communication research, intercoder reliability, also known as interrater reliability, is frequently employed as a standard method of content analysis. It is a measure of the extent to which independent coders arrive at the same coding decisions in evaluating the properties of messages, as stated by the definition that was provided for it by Lombard, Synder-Duch, and Bracken (2002). In light of the aforementioned information, conducting an evaluation of the intercoder reliability of the current study ought to involve a number of phases.

In the vast majority of cases, Krippendorff's alpha (α) is considered to be the most trustworthy metric of intercoder reliability. The formula for the overall value of the measure is as follows: $\alpha = 1 - Do/De$, where Do is the amount of observed disagreement and De is the amount of expected disagreement based on an interpretation of chance. Krippendorff (2004) states that when observers agree fully, observed disagreement $Do=0$ and $\alpha=1$, which implies perfect dependability. $Do=De$ and $\alpha=0$ demonstrate the lack of reliability when observers concur as though the results were

due to chance. Krippendorff (2004, p. 241) states, "To interpret alpha, the alpha value must be greater than or equal to .800. Where provisional results are still allowed, the value of alpha should be greater than or equal to .667 for the lowest possible limit.

In this context, 25 % of the data of the study was coded by the second encoder. Before coding, the second coder, who has a PhD in Communication Sciences, was interviewed online to exchange ideas about the coding process and the theories that are the subject of coding. In this interview, the second encoder was trained about the coding process. In this framework, the relationship between the encoder and the second encoder is examined according to Krippendorff's alpha. According to this, agreement between both coders is 100% excluding 2 category. For all data encoded in this framework, Krippendorff's alpha value is 1.0000; It was .8631 for the category of Crisis Response Strategy for Joe Biden and Themes of Posts for Donald Trump. The coding within the framework of Krippendorff's alpha value satisfies the criterion of $\alpha \geq .800$.

Results

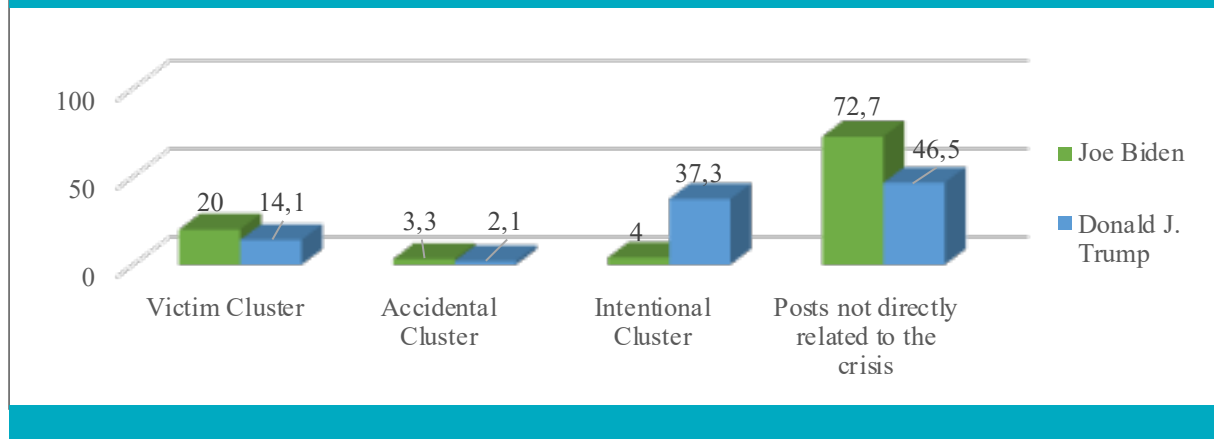
Two distinct statistical analyses were utilized in the study's data interpretation, and each of these interpretations was carried out on the computer using the statistical package program SPSS for Windows 22.00. The interpretations were carried out in order to draw conclusions about the research's findings. 1. Chi-square analysis 2. Independent Samples t Test

RQ1: What crisis cluster do the Facebook posts of leaders Trump and Biden represent?

Joe Biden's Facebook posts represent 20% Victim Cluster, 3.3% Accidental Cluster, 4% Intentional Cluster, 72.7%

Posts not directly related to the crisis cluster. Donald J. Trump's Facebook posts represent 14.1% Victim Cluster, 2.1% Accidental Cluster, 37.3% Intentional Cluster, 46.5% Posts not directly related to the crisis cluster, and the difference between them was statistically significant at $p < 0.05$ significance level. As a result, Joe Biden's Facebook posts are more representative of Posts not directly related to the crisis cluster, while Donald J. Trump's Facebook posts are more representative of Posts not directly related to the crisis and Intentional Cluster crisis clusters. See Figure 1.

Figure 1: Comparison of Trump and Biden in terms of Type of Crisis

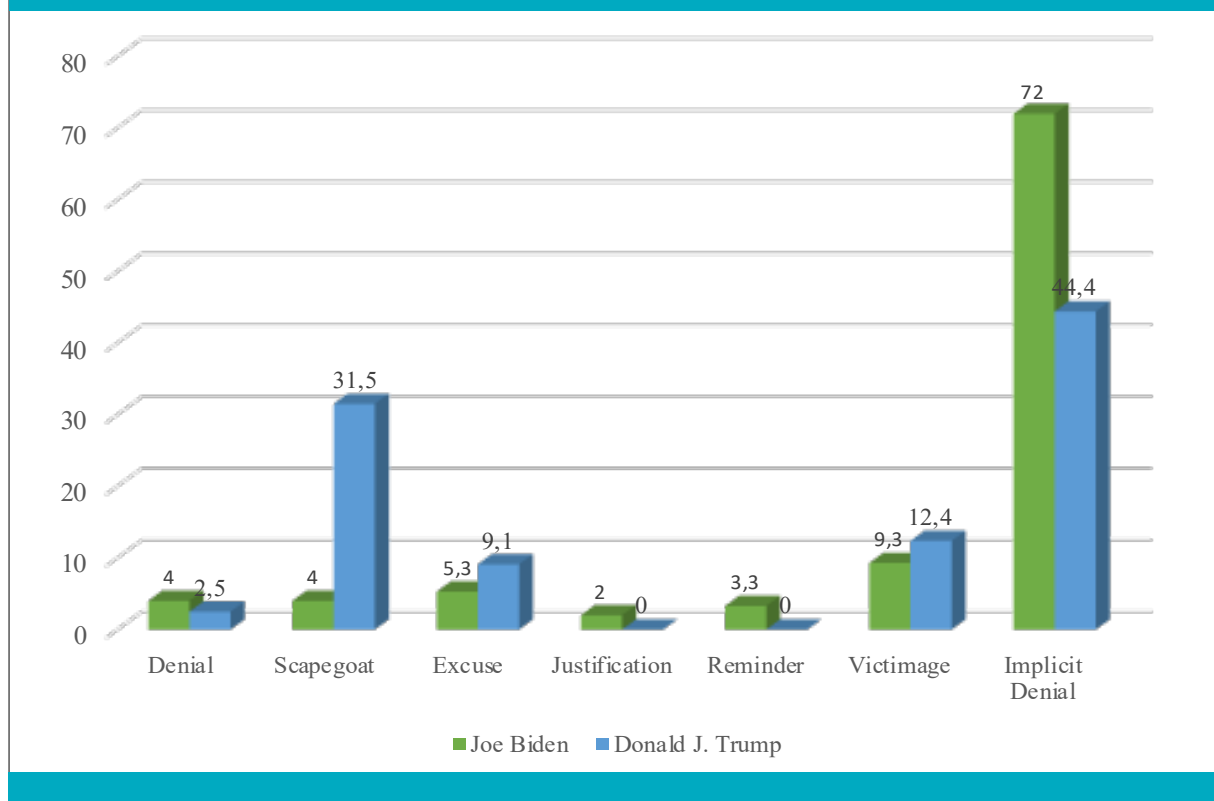


RQ2: What types of crisis response strategies did political leaders Trump and Biden primary use during the 2020-21 post-election crisis?

During the post-election, Joe Biden used 4% Denial, 4% Scapegoat, 5.3% Excuse, 2% Justification, 3.3% Reminder, 9.3% Victimage, 72% Implicit Denial as a crisis response

strategy. Donald J. Trump used 2.5% Denial as a crisis response strategy, 31.5% Scapegoat, 9.1% Excuse, 12.4% Victimage, 44.4% Implicit Denial and the difference between them was statistically significant at $p < 0.05$ significance level. As a result, while Joe Biden used Implicit Denial more as a crisis response strategy, Donald J. Trump used Implicit Denial and Scapegoat. See Figure 2.

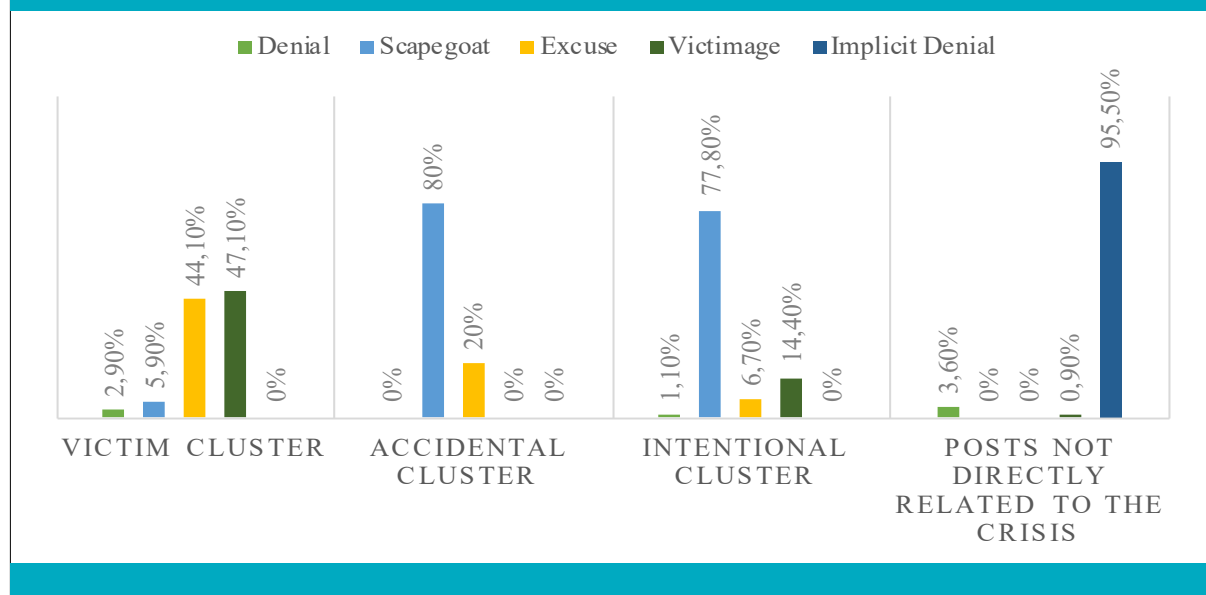
Figure 2: Crisis response strategies used by Trump and Biden



Chi-square analysis was applied to understand whether the crisis response strategies used by Donald J. Trump in the framework of different crisis types

during post-election crisis, and the findings are given in figure 3.

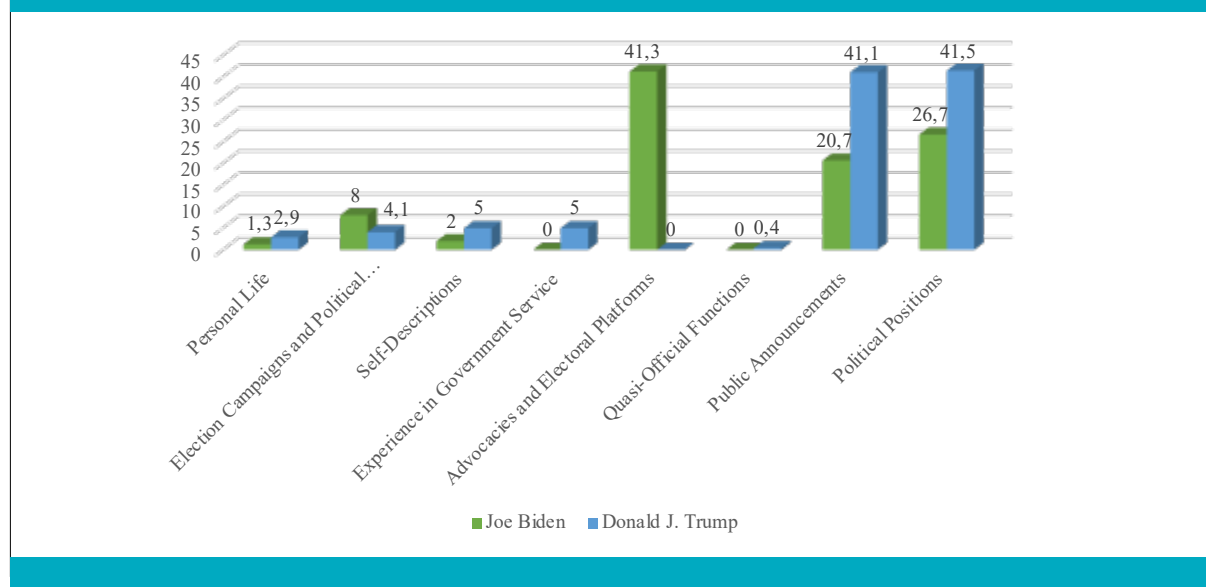
Figure 3: Crisis response strategies in the context of crisis cluster for Trump's posts



In the post-election period, Donald J. Trump used 2.9% Denial, 5.9% Scapegoat, 44.1% Excuse, 47.1% Victimage as a response strategy in his Facebook posts, which he perceived as the Victim Cluster. In the Accidental Cluster variant, Trump used 80% Scapegoat, 20% Excuse as an intervention strategy. In the Intentional Cluster, Trump used 1.1% Denial, 77.8% Scapegoat, 6.7% Excuse, 14.4% Victimage as an intervention strategy. In posts not directly related to the crisis, Trump used 3.6% Denial, 0.9% Victimage, 95.5% Implicit Denial as a crisis response strategy, and the difference between them was statistically significant at $p < 0.05$ significance level.

During the post-election, Joe Biden used 1.3% Personal Life, 8% Election Campaigns and Political Advertisements, 2% Self-Descriptions, 41.3% Advocacies and Electoral Platforms, 20.7% Public Announcements, 26.7% Political Positions themes in his Facebook posts. Donald J. Trump used 2.9% Personal Life, 4.1% Election Campaigns and Political Advertisements, 5% Self-Descriptions, 5% Experience in Government Service, 0.4% Quasi-Official Functions, 41.1% Public Announcements, 41.5% Political Positions. The difference between them was statistically $p < 0.05$. significance level was found to be significant. As a result, while Joe Biden used Advocacies and Electoral Platforms more in his Facebook posts, Donald J. Trump used Public Announcements and Political Positions. See Figure 4.

Figure 4: Comparison of the ratio of post themes used by Trump and Biden



Discussion

The difficulties and problems that it brings with it in the crisis environment and the knowledge gaps it creates on the public add a different meaning to the steps to be followed by the leader in the crisis period and increase the importance of the concept of leadership (Kim, 2021). In this context, the posts that presidential candidates Donald J. Trump and Joe Biden made on Facebook during the crisis that emerged after the 2020 presidential elections were examined. Additionally, how the leaders evaluated the crisis process, which crisis response strategies they used, and on which themes they used while making leadership presentations on social media are considered.

In the 10-week crisis period analysed in the study, it is seen that Donald J. Trump used social media more actively in the frame of 150 posts shared by Joe Biden, against Donald J. Trump's 241 posts.

In the framework of RQ1, in which how leaders perceive the crisis in this process and within which crisis cluster they are evaluated, it is seen that Joe Biden does not evaluate the process as a 'crisis situation' in general. Joe Biden did not touch on Donald Trump's post-election claims by

making posts that are not directly related to the crisis in general. 72.7 % of Joe Biden's posts are posts that are not directly related to the crisis. It is seen that Joe Biden, on the other hand, defines the situation as a crisis in 27.3 % of only Facebook posts. In addition, 20% of Joe Biden's posts are evaluated in the Victim Cluster. In this context, it is seen that Joe Biden made posts stating that he was a victim when he perceived the crisis process and that he was not responsible for a crisis.

Donald Trump, on the other hand, referred to the crisis in 53.5% of his posts. Donald Trump, who evaluated the crisis within the context of the Intentional Cluster with a rate of 37.3%, argues that mostly human errors or organisational mistakes are made intentionally.

However, according to the January 6 Committee's report, Trump refused to accept the lawful results of the 2020 elections and made false allegations of fraud to change the election result (TRT World, 2022).

Donald Trump's posts, which received the most interaction according to the arithmetic average, are as follows:



Donald J. Trump ✓

13 December 2020 · 🌐

Swing States that have found massive VOTER FRAUD, which is all of them, CANNOT LEGALLY CERTIFY these votes as complete & correct without committing a severely punishable crime. Everybody knows that dead people, below age people, illegal immigrants, fake signatures, prisoners, and many others voted illegally. Also, machine "glitches" (another word for FRAUD), ballot harvesting, non-resident voters, fake ballots, "stuffing the ballot box", votes for pay, roughed up Republican Poll Watchers, and sometimes even more votes than people voting, took place in Detroit, Philadelphia, Milwaukee, Atlanta, Pittsburgh, and elsewhere. In all Swing State cases, there are far more votes than are necessary to win the State, and the Election itself. Therefore, VOTES CANNOT BE CERTIFIED. THIS ELECTION IS UNDER PROTEST!



Donald J. Trump ✓

13 December 2020 · 🌐

MOST CORRUPT ELECTION IN U.S. HISTORY!



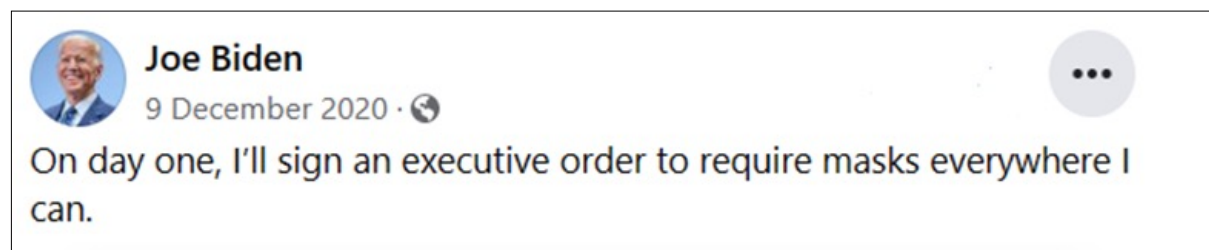
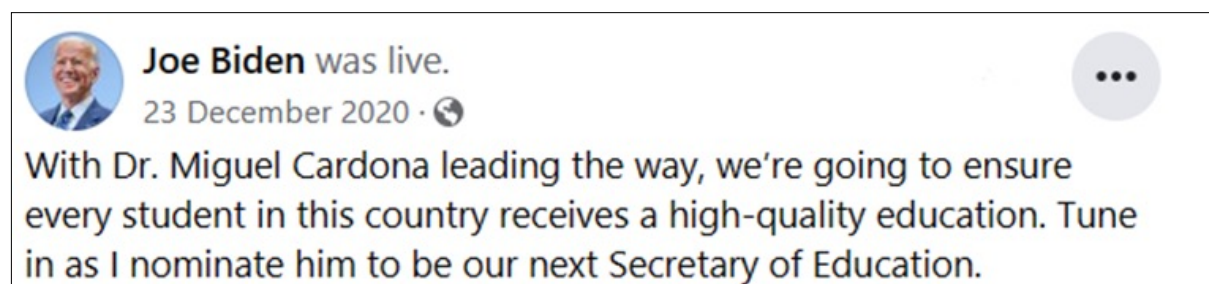
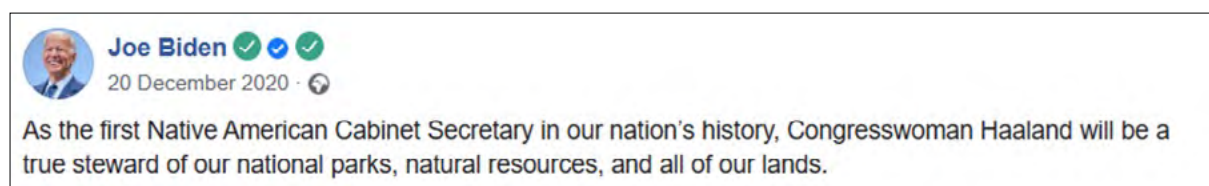
Donald J. Trump ✓✓✓

15 December 2020 · 🌐

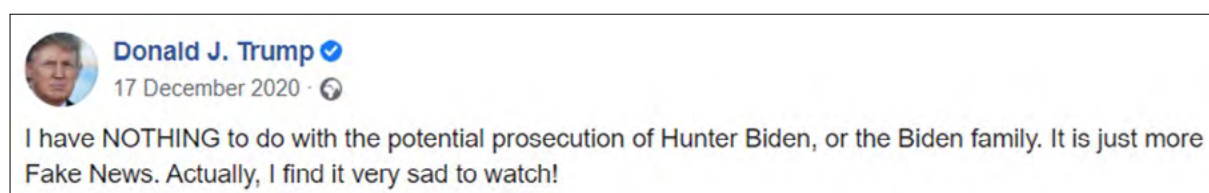
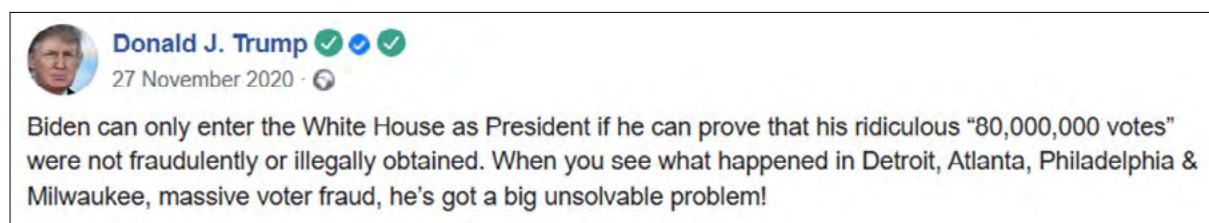
68% error rate in Michigan Voting Machines. Should be, by law, a tiny percentage of one percent. Did Michigan Secretary of State break the law? Stay tuned!

In the framework of RQ1, where crisis response strategies were asked, it is seen that Joe Biden used the Implicit Denial response strategy more. Biden used SCCT crisis response strategies in only 28 % of his posts. In these strategies, 9.3 % preferred the victimage crisis response strategy. Joe Biden, who made social media posts that included the Implicit Denial response strategy at a rate of 72%, preferred

to reject the crisis by sharing outside the crisis in a crisis situation. Joe Biden's posts mainly included the steps he will take during his presidency. The theme Joe Biden used the most in his social media posts was Advocacies and Electoral Platforms with 62 %. Donald Trump has never used this theme.



After the election, Trump shared posts targeting Biden directly from time to time. However, Biden did not respond to Trump's allegations of electoral corruption or election protests until the January 6 Capitol riot.





Today is a reminder, a painful one, that democracy is fragile. To preserve it requires people of good will, leaders with the courage to stand up, who are devoted not to pursuit of power and personal interest at any cost, but to the common good.



For the past four years, President Trump has unleashed an all-out assault on the institutions of our democracy.

Yesterday was but the culmination of that unrelenting attack.



Our president is not above the law.

Justice serves the people — it doesn't protect the powerful.

Donald Trump used SCCT crisis response strategies in 55.6% of his Facebook posts. Among the SCCT crisis response strategies, Trump used the scapegoat response strategy the most with 31.5 percent and blamed others for the crisis situation.



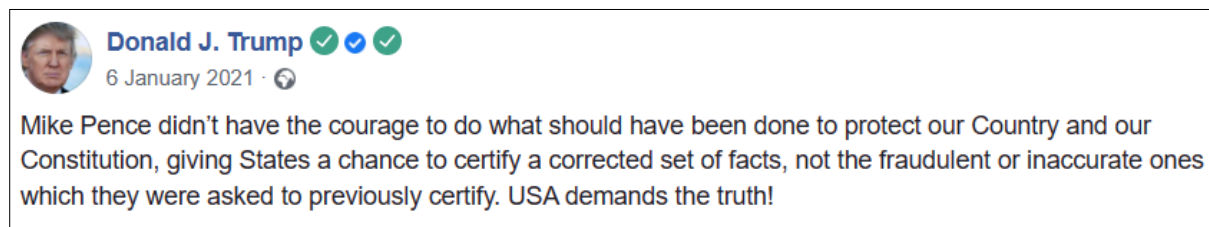
This was a rigged election. No Republican Poll Watchers allowed, voting machine "glitches" all over the place (meaning they got caught cheating!), voting after election ended, and so much more!



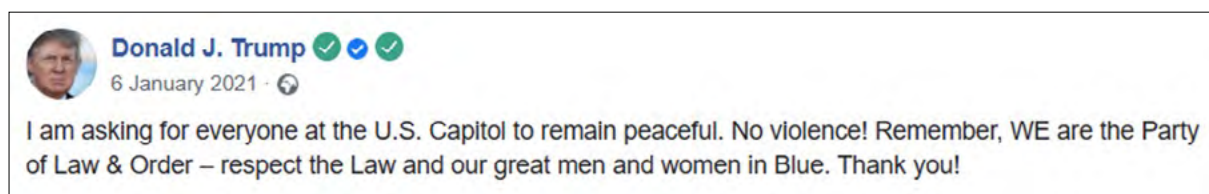
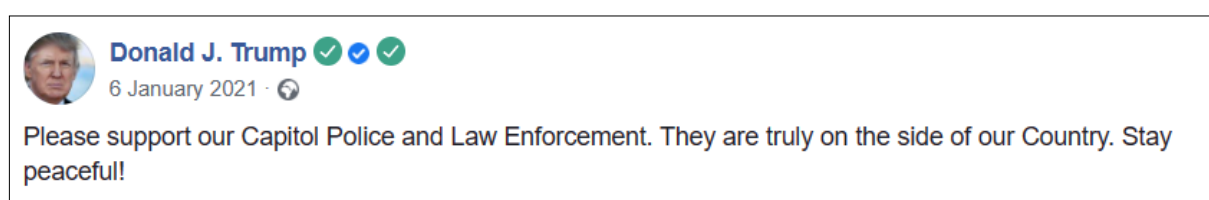
The "Justice" Department and the FBI have done nothing about the 2020 Presidential Election Voter Fraud, the biggest SCAM in our nation's history, despite overwhelming evidence. They should be ashamed. History will remember. Never give up. See everyone in D.C. on January 6th.

In addition, the report of the January 6 Committee included the allegation that Trump pressured Mike Pence. According to report, despite knowing that such an action would be illegal, and that no state had or would submit an altered electoral slate, Trump corruptly pressured vice-president Mike Pence to refuse to count electoral votes during Con-

gress's joint session on January 6. Furthermore, knowing that a violent attack on the Capitol was under way and knowing that his words would incite further violence, Trump purposely sent a social media message publicly condemning vice-president Pence on January 6.



Trump shared this posts on January 6 to calm the crisis.



Situational crisis communication theory looks at how the responsibility given to an organisation during a crisis affects how the organisation responds to the crisis. In this context, it is an important part of the theory to make a crisis response strategy based on the type of crisis (Kim and Zhang, 2016). When Joe Biden is analysed in this context, he mostly used the victimage, denial, excuse and reminder response strategies, respectively, in the Facebook posts that he perceived as the Victim Cluster of the crisis pro-

cess. In Accidental and Intentional crisis types, Biden again mainly used the excuse and victimage crisis response strategy. On the other hand, Donald Trump, like Joe Biden, used the victimage and excuse crisis response strategy in his Facebook posts, which he perceived as victim cluster, respectively. Evaluating the process within the Accidental and Intentional crisis cluster, and sharing more, Trump used the most scapegoat, excuse and victimage crisis response strategy in parallel with the theory.



(Tayfun Coşkun - Anadolu Agency)

Limitations and future suggestions

The study focused on the sharing of the two leaders during the crisis over Facebook. The study also focused on the period after the Capitol protests for Joe Biden, but data could only be collected for Donald Trump until January 6, 2021, as Facebook suspended Donald Trump's account.

The most important limitation of the study is the absence of Donald Trump's data, especially after this period when the crisis reached its peak. In addition, only Facebook was emphasised in the study.

Conclusion

Situational crisis communication theory is a theory that examines the relationship between the responsibility attributed to the organisation in crisis situations and the response of the organisation to the crisis and focuses on the effects of these dynamics on organisational reputation. In other words, creating the crisis communication strategy according to the crisis type really provides significant benefits to the organisations (Liu, and Zhang, 2016). In this study, rather than the study of situational crisis communication theory through general companies and institutions, the election process in a democratic country and the leaders in this process are discussed as a field of study. In this context, the evaluation of the 2020 election, the impact of which will be understood more in the historical process, within the framework of the situational crisis communication theory and the self-presentations of the leaders in the social media can lay the groundwork for future studies and may be useful for crisis communication.

When the research questions of the study were examined within the framework of the situational crisis communication theory, it was seen that Donald Trump defined the crisis mostly within the framework of the Intentional cluster. Joe Biden, on the other hand, accuses Donald Trump of making allegations of electoral fraud in the Capitol riot.

The January 6 committee's report interprets Trump's post-election approach as deliberately tampering with legal election results. The law will evaluate Trump's approach in the context of concrete evidence. However, in the context of crisis communication, it is seen that Trump, as a leader, cannot manage the crisis effectively.



(Neal Waters - Anadolu Agency)

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