

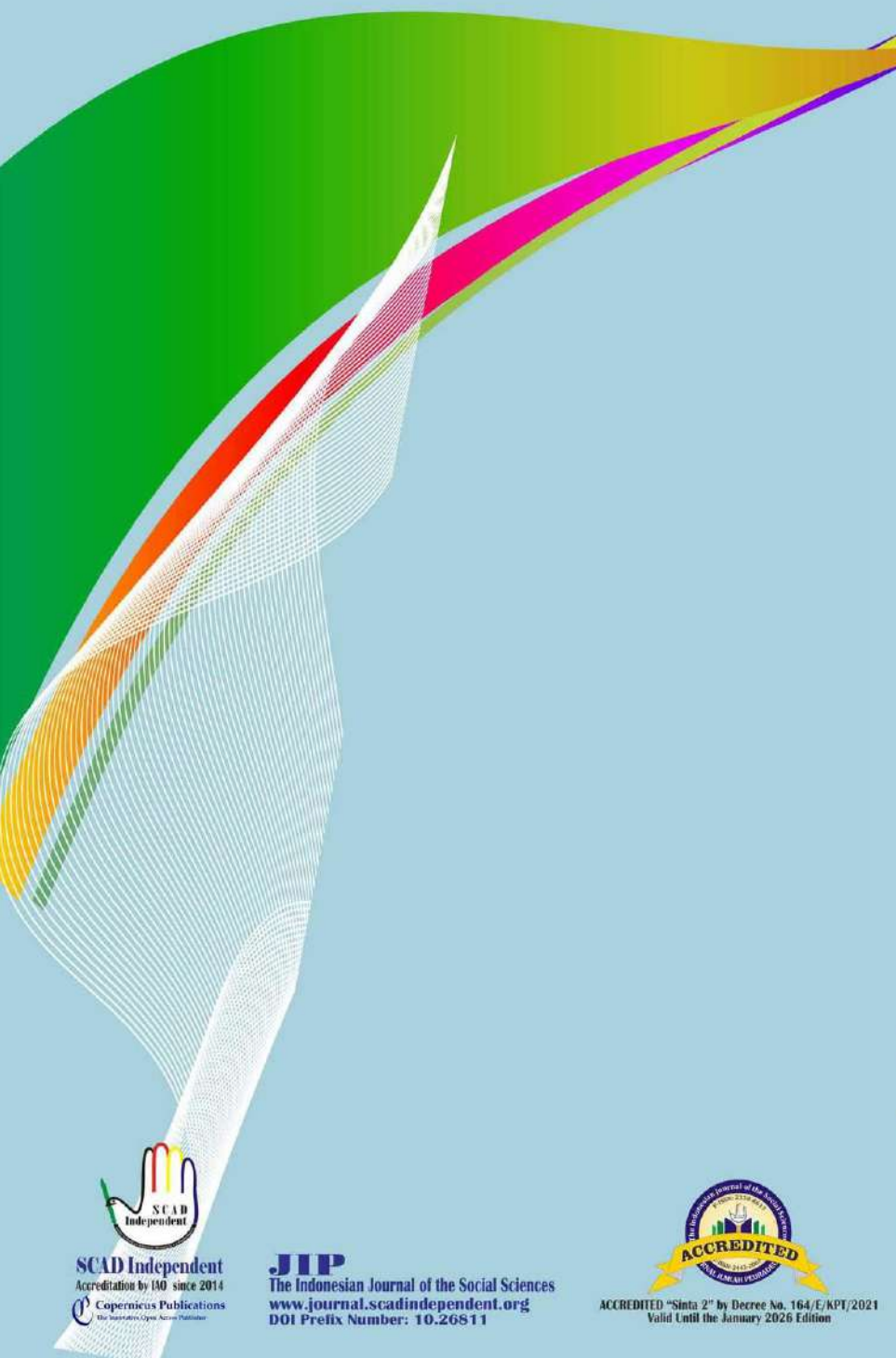
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Benny Wenda's Political Propaganda about the Free Papua Issue Through Twitter

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BENNY WENDA'S POLITICAL PROPAGANDA ABOUT THE FREE PAPUA ISSUE THROUGH TWITTER

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Abstract

*The purpose of this study was to explain the political propaganda of the free Papua issue spread by Benny Wenda via his Twitter account. This study used a qualitative approach to analyze Benny Wenda's Twitter account. The NVivo 12 Plus software was used in this study because it can process Benny Wenda's Twitter data. This research discovered Benny Wenda's Twitter propaganda of the free Papua issue divided into 11 important topics, namely "Occupation", "media", "independence", "colonial", "today", "support", "rights", "prisoners", "Political prisoners", "people" and "Papuan". The 11 topics were further broken down into several important topics related to the issue of an independent Papua. From the analysis of Benny Wenda's Twitter account, it was also found that support for the Papuan independence movement was spread in several regions, including North America, South America, Europe, Africa, Asia, and Australia. Despite this massive support, the UN has not recognized this movement, as stated by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres that Papua is part of Indonesian territory through *uti possideti iuris*, the NY Agreement of 1962, the Act of Free Choice of 1969, and UNGA resolution 2504 (XXIV) of 1969.*

Keywords: *Propaganda; Free Papua Issues; Benny Wenda; Twitter.*



A. Introduction

Benny Wenda again became an important topic in Indonesia's political constellation, especially when he declared the formation of an independent interim government in West Papua (Webb-Gannon, 2014). Through his official Twitter account on December 1, 2020, he stated: "Today, we announce the formation of our Provisional Government of #WestPapua. From today, December 1, 2020, we begin implementing our constitution and reclaiming our sovereign land". This declaration certainly took the Indonesian government by surprise. Through Menkopolhukam Mahfud MD, the declaration via Twitter was responded to by calling Benny Wenda forming an illusory state (Detik News, 2020; Lesmana & Nirmala Sari, 2020; Maulana, 2020; Pikiran Rakyat, 2020).

It is not the only time Benny Wenda has done activities threatening Indonesia's sovereignty. It is still apparent in the public's memory when Benny Wenda secretly joined the Vanuatu delegation that held a meeting with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (KTHAM PBB) in Geneva, Switzerland, which discusses the UPR (Universal Periodic Review). During the meeting, Benny Wenda submitted a petition which he claimed had been signed by 1.8 million people in Papua from a total of 2.5 million Papuans, to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet. The petition stated that the Papuan people under the control of the Indonesian government did not get freedom and asked KTHAM PBB to intervene in solving the problem (CNN Indonesia, 2019; Detik News, 2019; Hakim, 2020; Rakyat Merdeka, 2019).

What Benny Wenda has done shows that the Papua problem until 2021 is still a significant problem in every Indonesian government regime, starting from the first President and currently, Joko Widodo. Although Papua and West Papua 2002 have received special autonomy (Otsus) funds, an amount that has also increased significantly yearly (Pona, 2013). Until 2020 alone, the special autonomy funds received by the two provinces have reached IDR. 94 Trillion. Even in 2021, it is budgeted to be 3% more than the previous year, which reached a nominal value of IDR 7.8 trillion. Laus Deo Calvin Rumayom stated it, Expert of the Presidential Staff Office of Deputy V for Politics, Law and Defense, Security, and Human Rights (CNN Indonesia, 2020).

However, it turns out that the special autonomy has yet to make several groups opposed to the government withdraw from their efforts to separate from Indonesia. Such as ULMWP and TPNPB-OPM. It is clear that in the end, the Indonesian government faces a dilemma in resolving this Papua problem. If they apply the Military Operation Area (DOM) as in the New Order era, it is clear that this will become a problem of serious human rights violations (Al Rahab, 2006). When finally, the option was to make Papua a particular autonomous region with funding that was constantly increasing significantly, but still, the problem of the welfare of the Papuan people could not be resolved. Even the irony is that there are some findings that regional heads also corrupted the special autonomy fund, so the Papua problem is complex (Wakum, 2019).

The consistency of Benny Wenda, who has always fought abroad to get support for Papua's independence from the international community, is always interesting to examine. Because even though he knows it must be tough to encourage the Indonesian government to release Papua from the territory of the Republic of Indonesia, he still looks for support everywhere for Papuan independence. In the end, this figure reminds us of Xanana Gusmao and his Fretilin, who successfully pushed the Indonesian government to grant referendum rights to East Timor at that time. Finally, the referendum right resulted in more pro-separation votes from Indonesia than that pro-integration with Indonesia. Although indeed, the unstable domestic political factors in Indonesia at that time also influenced the success of Xanana Gusmao in establishing the state of Timor Leste (Sasongko, 2013).

Momentum like that is definitely what Benny Wenda is trying to get, even though there is one minus point that Benny Wenda has. Because he is fighting abroad and does not get great respect from all Papuans. For example, the military wing organization of the TPNPB-OPM did not support Benny Wenda's declaration. As revealed by the spokesman for the TPNPB-OPM, Sebby Sambom said, the declaration was legally flawed because it was declared not by a Papuan citizen but by a foreign citizen named Benny Wenda (Andriansyah, 2020).



Ultimately, the separatist movement, both ULMWP and TPNPM-OPM, needed to be more solid. Thus, the Indonesian government does not need to be too serious in responding to Benny Wenda's declaration, especially with the recognition of Papua as part of the Indonesian territory by the United Nations through the *uti possideti iuris*, NY Agreement 1962, Act of Free Choice 1969, and UN GA resolution 2504 (XXIV) 1969. The decision was reaffirmed by the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, who said there was nothing to question about Papua because it is part of the sovereign territory of Indonesia (Warta Ekonomi, 2019).

Although in the end, the UN recognized Papua as part of Indonesia. However, according to the research conducted by Benny Wenda, it is exciting to study, especially the propaganda efforts that he does through a Twitter account which can make the Indonesian government always alert to its activities in online media, especially Twitter. This research has a research question, namely, How is the propaganda of the Papuan independence issue by Benny Wenda through his Twitter account? Therefore, a researcher will use qualitative data analysis software NVivo 12 Plus to answer these questions. Researchers will use this software to obtain data content on Twitter, data classification, topic mapping, analysis of data content linkages, and text cloud content on Twitter.

This research has a research gap with previous studies, especially on the topic of Papua independence. In previous studies, there has been more talk about efforts to secession by the Free Papua Organization (OPM) and the United Liberation Movement for West Papua (ULMWP). However, this research tries to focus on efforts to separate themselves through propaganda carried out by one of the ULMWP leaders, Benny Wenda, so this research will provide a new finding that is different from previous research.

B. Method

This study uses a qualitative approach to analyze the contents of Benny Wenda's Twitter social media, which seeks to propagate the issue of independent Papua. In analyzing Twitter content, the researcher will do several stages in this study. First, determine the object of analysis. In this study, a researcher used Benny Wenda's official Twitter account as the object of analysis. Second,

collect Twitter content from Benny Wenda that follows the object of research. Third, data categorization and analysis of each Twitter content. This third stage is crucial in analyzing Twitter content because the researcher must be able to analyze and interpret Twitter content (L. Lai & Ming To, 2015).

This study uses the data in the social media Twitter as the primary data to describe the propaganda of the Papuan independence issue. The data content on Twitter is also used by the researcher to explain the propaganda of the Papuan independence issue and to comprehensively describe and analyze the propaganda of the Papuan independence issue. In this study, the researcher used NVivo 12 Plus Software to analyze Twitter social media content, which can process Benny Wenda's Twitter data as the subject of this research. The stages in using the NVivo 12 Plus software in this study are installing the NVivo 12 Plus software for windows, installing the NCapture extension on Google Chrome, capturing twitter content through the NCapture application that has been integrated with NVivo 12 Plus and Google Chrome, importing twitter data from NCapture results. Go to NVivo 12 Plus work screen, manage twitter data on NVivo 12 Plus work screen, auto code twitter content and generalize topics, visualize topics in graphic form, conduct network analysis of actors involved with Benny Wenda's Twitter related to the issue of propaganda for Papua independence through features sociogram on NVivo 12 Plus, performs analysis related to content equations twitter through the feature cluster analysis feature and Pearson's correlation and coefficient formula. The last stage of using NVivo 12 Plus is to produce data that can be categorized and interpreted to answer the research question in this study (Jones, 2014; Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2011).

C. Result and Discussion

1. Result

- a. Benny Wenda and the Papuan Independence Struggle from a media perspective

The figure of Benny Wenda became an essential actor in the struggle for Papuan independence; this can be seen from the framing of the media, both local and foreign, against this figure. Benny Wenda is the chairman of



the United Liberation Movement for West Papua (ULMWP), better known as the Free West Papua Movement. He currently resides in London. What can be understood from Benny Wenda's figure so far is that he has always tried to encourage the United Nations to visit Papua and see for himself the unfair treatment of the Indonesian government. In this case, according to Benny Wenda, there is a systematic violation of human rights against indigenous Papuans (Mansyur, 2019).

His efforts to internationalize the issue of Papua finally made this figure become the news of many media, for example, when Benny Wenda was interviewed by Tempo magazine. He said that “there is no room for democracy in Papua”. His statement received a negative response from the Indonesian government, and on the other hand, it turned out that many foreign media made his statement their media headlines. As stated by Philpott that “the conflict in Papua has generated international interest and media coverage”. So it becomes very natural if, in the end, the issue of independent Papua becomes an international issue (Philpott, 2018).

In the end, the news about Benny Wenda becomes interesting to study because there are two polarization types of news. First, foreign media consistently report on Benny Wenda positively. Second, the local (Indonesian) media always negatively reports Benny Wenda. The polarization can be seen in the following table:

Table 1. Polarization of news about Benny Wenda

| Media Indonesia | | Media luar | |
|--|--|---|---|
| <i>ANTARA News</i> | <i>TEMPO.CO</i> | <i>RNZ</i> | <i>The Guardian</i> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • separatist leader • the wrong person • conspiracy • accused • not be provided • provocation • fake promise | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mobilizing masses • spreading false and misleading information • escaped from prison • the mastermind • conspiracy • separatist's instigation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the chairman • most active lobbyist • ulmwp leader • denies • racist abuse against them • a criminal suspect | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • independence leader • official representative • urge government leaders • human rights abuses • exiled West Papuan leader |

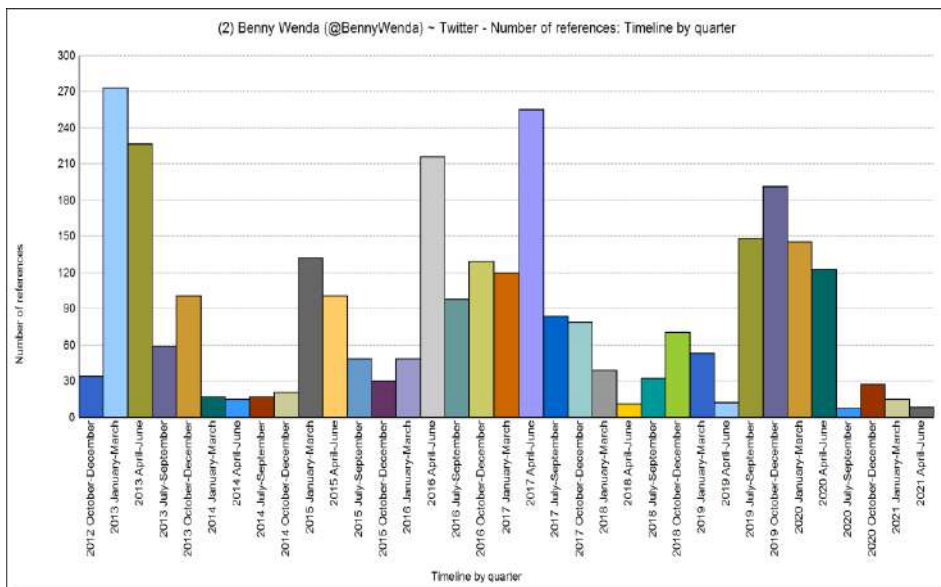
Source: Table in the article entitled Benny Wenda's ideology of representation in Indonesian English media and foreign media, by Siti Awaliyah Mansyur



Based on the description of the news about Benny Wenda, we can categorize the two types of news that appear about Benny Wenda. First, local media such as Antara News and Tempo. Co always reports Benny Wenda with negative narratives, such as separatist leaders, conspiracy experts, givers of false hope, and others. Meanwhile, foreign media such as RNZ and The Guardian consistently report Benny Wenda with positive narratives, such as independence leaders, official representatives, exiled leaders of West Papua, and others. Benny Wenda's figure is what researchers will analyze more deeply, primarily related to his activities on Twitter social media.

b. Analysis of Benny Wenda's Twitter content about the Propaganda of the Free Papua Issue

Based on Benny Wenda's Twitter analysis using NVivo 12 Plus, important information was obtained regarding Benny Wenda's activities in propagating the issue of Free Papua. He started his activities on Twitter in October 2012, and the most recent activities were carried out in June 2021. The data can be seen in the graph below:



Graph 1. Timeline of propaganda activities on the free Papua issue by Benny Wenda through social media twitter

Source: Benny Wenda's official twitter processed with the NVivo 12 plus chart menu

The topics that Benny Wenda always mentions on his Twitter related to the issue of Free Papua can be seen in the image below:

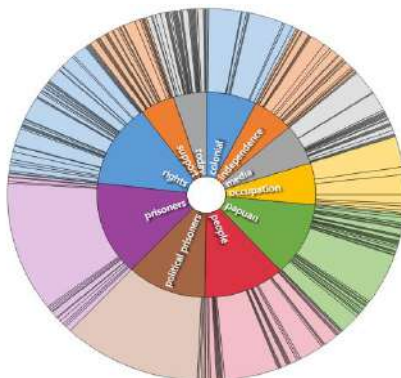


Figure 1. Topics that Benny Wenda always mentions regarding the issue of free Papua on twitter

Source: Auto code results for topics mentioned on Benny Wenda's official twitter with NVivo 12 Plus

Based on the results of Auto Code NVivo 12 Plus Benny Wenda's Twitter, 11 topics are dimensioned, namely: "Occupation", "media", "independence", "colonial", "today", "support", "rights", "prisoners", "political prisoners", "people" and "papuan". Each topic is then further elaborated into several other important topics.

On the topic of "occupation", there are five issues that Benny Wenda always mentions, namely: "ongoing colonial occupation", "military occupation", "illegal occupation", "illegal colonial occupation", and "colonial occupation". The image below shows the division of the topic "occupation".

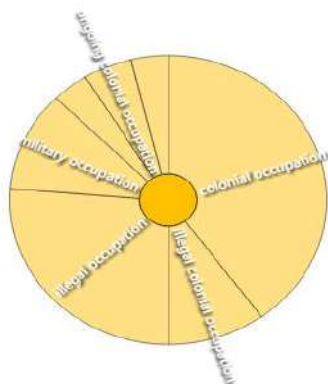


Figure 2. Issues on occupational topics

Source: Auto code results of occupational topic with NVivo 12 plus

On the topic of "media", there are five issues that Benny Wenda always mentions, namely: "foreign media", "social media accounts", "social media", "media freedom", and "international media". The figure below shows the division of the "media" topic.

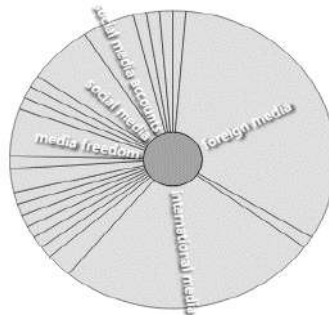


Figure 3. Issues on media topic

Source: Auto code results of media topic with NVivo 12 plus

On the topic of "independence", there are six issues that Benny Wenda mentions, namely: "independence day", "Palestinian independence", "independence struggle", "independence referendum", "independence movement", and "independence leader". The image below shows the division of the topic "independence".

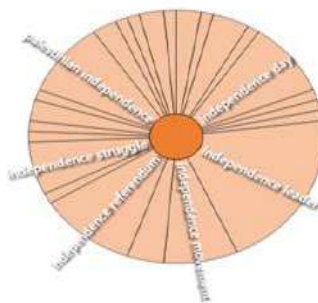


Figure 4. Issues on independence topic

Source: Auto code results of independence topic with NVivo 12 plus

On the topic of "colonial", there were five issues that Benny Wenda mentioned, namely: "colonial occupation", "ongoing colonial occupation", "illegal colonial occupation", "colonial rule", and "colonial power". The image below shows the division of the topic "colonial".



On the topic of “rights”, there are six issues that are mentioned by Benny Wenda, namely: “human rights abuses”, “fundamental rights”, “legal rights”, “inalienable rights”, “human rights violations”, and “human rights groups”. The image below shows the division of the “rights” topic.

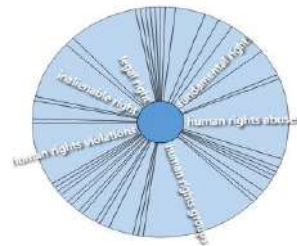


Figure 8. Issues on the rights topic

Source: Auto code results of rights topic with NVivo 12 plus

On the topic of “prisoners” and “political prisoners”, there is one issue that Benny Wenda mentions, namely: “political prisoners”. The image below shows the division of the “prisoners and political prisoners” topic.

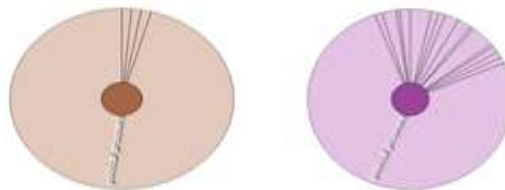


Figure 9. Issues on the topic of prisoners and political prisoners

Source: Auto code results of prisoners and political prisoners topic with NVivo 12 plus

On the topic of “people”, there are four issues that Benny Wenda mentions, namely: “indigenous people”, “free people”, “Papuan people”, and “innocent people”. The image below shows the division of the “people” topic.

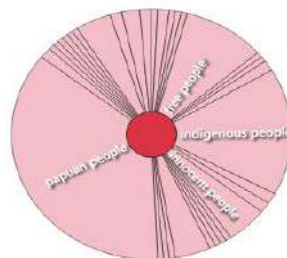


Figure 9. Issues on the topic of people

Source: Auto code results of people topic with NVivo 12 Plus



On the topic of “Papuan”, there are three issues mentioned by Benny Wenda, namely: “Papuan activists”, “West Papuans”, and “Papuan people”. The image below shows the division of the “Papuan” topic.

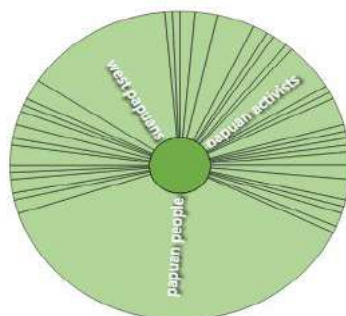


Figure 10. Issues on the topic of Papuan
Source: Auto code results of papuan topic with NVivo 12 plus

2. Discussion

a. Free Papua Issue

The issue of an independent Papua has long been an issue that has always been a topic of discussion by foreign heads of state, especially heads of state in the South Pacific region and national and international academics. It cannot be separated from the history of Papua, which has become a land for exploiting natural resources, especially minerals and gas, by foreign and national companies supported by the Indonesian military. Ultimately, this keeps the Papuan people away from their livelihoods for daily life (Blades, 2020).

This condition increased the anti-government sentiment in Indonesia, especially in the New Order era. After the reformation, especially when the Papuan people saw the successful disintegration of East Timor from Indonesia, they saw that Papua also could separate itself from Indonesia. The Free Papua Organization, which we know as OPM, was born during this period. OPM sees the opportunity for independence is getting higher, especially in the era of President Abdurrahman Wahid (Gusdur), who allowed the Papuan people to raise the Morning Star flag (Blades, 2020).

The previous year was 1999, President Habibie’s era before Gusdur became President. The Papuan community consisting of Papuan Muslims,

students, and members of the Regional People's Representative Assembly (DPRD) submitted a petition to the Central government to recognize the independence of Papua on December 1, 1961 and demanded that the Central government implement a transition of power by the end of March 1999. It is known as the "Political Statement of the West Papuan Nation to the Government of the Republic of Indonesia" (Broek & Szalay, 2001).

One Indonesian researcher, Syanthy Christianty, in her thesis at Malmo University, Sweden, has also discussed the issue of Free Papua. She mentioned that one form of right that should be given to the Papuan people based on the UN charter is the right to self-determination. However, she questioned the Indonesian government's argument for not giving this right by calling the Papuan people a primitive society that cannot determine their destiny (Christianty, 2020).

Groups have made various efforts with a mission to separate Papua from Indonesia, one of which was carried out by the West Papua National Committee. Through its deputy chairman Victor Yeimo, this group encouraged violence to achieve its interests so that a referendum on Papuan independence was held, and many other organizations did the same (Elmslie et al., 2010).

b. Propaganda Issues Through Social Media

Several definitions of propaganda, among others, are defined as an effort made by a propagandist to spread issues through social media. The method used is through persuasion with information content that supports the goals of a propagandist in the hope of forming public opinion to support the issues promoted by the propagandist. Propaganda is a systematic effort to manipulate an issue to form a public perception that benefits the propagandist. In different aspects, this is interpreted as manipulation of political information (Nelson, 1996).

Media for spreading propaganda then became varied, as described by Jowett and O'Donnel, among others, electronic media and print media.



Using suitable media, of course, is based on the capabilities possessed by the propagandists in both economy and the effectiveness of the selected media (Nelson, 1996).

In the propaganda aspect of the Papua issue, Elmslie explained that the Indonesian government has never reported real news about Papua. For example, a news report related to a statement from Demus Wenda stated that the KNPB had never carried out an attack. However, news published by mainstream media such as Cenderawasih Pos and Papua Pos stated that Demus Wenda admitted to carrying out the attack. It shows the propaganda efforts of the Indonesian government through its mainstream media to manipulate information which essentially corners the KNPB (Elmslie et al., 2010).

The propaganda of an issue through the media, even though it is not related to the Papua issue, has also been written by Douglas Kellner when discussing the United States military invasion of Iraq in 2003. In his writing, Douglas describes how the efforts of the Bush administration in smoothing out its military invasion of Iraq using international media networks that it has. The Bush administration propagated that Iraq was developing weapons of mass destruction so that the international public was expected to justify the US military invasion of Iraq, even though it turns out that after the invasion, there were many hidden agendas carried out by the Bush administration in Iraq (Kellner, 2004).

The propaganda politics of the Free Papua issue carried out by Benny Wenda using his Twitter account can be said to be the most relevant and appropriate strategy to do because, as a social movement, its success is then determined by the legitimacy and support for the movement (Purnama Hadi, 2016). The Free Papua Movement is a think local, act globally, so the network of this movement is robust, spread across the South Pacific countries and Europe. The picture below shows a network of relationships between Twitter accounts that support Benny Wenda (Degree in).



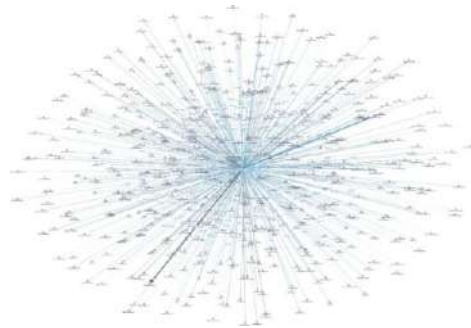


Figure 11. Relationship of twitter accounts that support the free Papua issue (twitter account Benny Wenda)

Source: Benny Wenda's official twitter, processed with the sociogram NVivo 12 plus twitter menu

The picture finally proves that Benny Wenda's Twitter activities have received tremendous support from the international community; this can also be seen from the origin of the support, as shown in the image below.



Figure 12. Map of origin of support for the free Papua movement (twitter account Benny Wenda)

Source: Benny Wenda's official twitter processed with the NVivo 12 plus map menu

From the map, data shows that support for the Free Papua Movement (Official Twitter Benny Wenda) comes from several regions, including North America, South America, Europe, Africa, Asia, and Australia. It shows that the support is very massive and comes from all regions. What is attractive based on this support is that Benny Wenda's use of media technology has had a significant impact with the emergence of encouragement and support from the global community for the Papuan independence movement. This strategy is called by Rany Purnama Hadi, a cyber protest (Purnama Hadi, 2016).



D. Conclusion

The issue of Free Papua, which Benny Wenda has propagated since October 2012, shows that he is earnest about using social media to internationalize the issue. The strategy he then chose was through cyber protest. The impact obtained is significant with the emergence of support from the international community for the Papuan independence movement.

Although, the fact is that until 2021, the United Nations, through its Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, said that there was nothing to be questioned about Papua because it is part of the sovereign territory of Indonesia. However, as a sovereign country, Indonesia must remain vigilant with this movement.

Based on the analysis of Benny Wenda's official Twitter using NVivo 12 Plus, 11 topics that are always mentioned in his Twitter account and propagated by Benny Wenda are "Occupation", "media", "independence", "colonial", "today", "support", "rights", "prisoners", "political prisoners", "people" and "Papuan". If examined more deeply, the 11 topics have the same message that Indonesia, as a colonial state, has annexed Papua's sovereign territory and committed severe human rights violations in Papua. Therefore, he asked Indonesia to leave Papua's sovereign territory. That is the message Benny Wenda always conveys on his Twitter account and propagates to get support and legitimacy from the international community.

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