

The Role of Social Media in Building Political Discourse: Political Polarization, UU ITE and Echo Chambers

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ABSTRACT: This research examines the role of social media and legal analysis in shaping political discourse in Indonesia. As social media platforms have become increasingly dominant as the main arena for political engagement, their impact on public opinion and political processes has increased significantly. This research explores how social media influences political awareness, mobilization and polarization among Indonesians. The analysis focuses on the mechanisms of framing and narrative construction used by political actors to influence public opinion and the resulting effects on political behavior and attitudes. It also investigates the phenomenon of echo chambers and their contribution to political polarization, highlighting the interplay between the algorithms that govern content delivery and the patterns of user interaction. Through a combination of content analysis, surveys and case studies, this research provides a comprehensive understanding of the dynamic relationship between social media and political discourse. The findings show that while social media increases political participation and democratizes access to information, it also poses challenges such as the spread of disinformation and increased political divisions. The research concludes with recommendations for policymakers, social media platforms and civil society to foster a more informative and cohesive political environment. In the context of the ITE Law in Indonesia, it is worth noting that this regulation plays an important role in regulating content spread on social media, including in the context of political discussions. ITE Law regulates the use of information and electronic technology with quite broad provisions, including content that can be considered offensive or violate certain norms.

KEYWORDS: Social Media; Political discourse; ITE Law; Echo Chambers; Political Polarization

INTRODUCTION

The contribution of social media has become a very important part of politics. Social media has become a platform for building political communication flows that are useful for polarizing information to be conveyed to the public. Social media plays a role in informing the public about various political issues, government policies, and the

behavior of leaders public. This is then utilized by several public figures to achieve a political goal. (Farid 2023)

Politicians, political parties and various other actors utilize social media to publicize issues that need attention, so that the public can be aware of political issues that occur. This has led to direct participation from the public through interactive platforms such as live streaming, polls, stories features to participate in and influence the political

process. (Gayatri, Bagus Canirartha Satwika, and Bagus Sugriwa Denpasar 2022).

Looking at the basic understanding of social media, it is important to see and understand that social media has great power to shape public opinion and influence the outcome of elections. This polarization of information by a politician can see the strategic value of social media as a tool to influence voters, garner support and build the desired image.

In the current political year, social media has generated political discourse and polarization that can have widespread political consequences. People's reactions to political news and opinions can influence public opinion and can be an important factor in the political process. The development of social media has undergone a significant transformation. From the new order, which was dominated by print and broadcast media controlled by the government, to the reform era that brought press freedom and the emergence of various independent media. (Dania & Nisa, n.d., 2024).

Given the usefulness of the media, it also acts as a bridge between the government and the public, providing the public with the information they need to make informed political decisions. In addition, the media also serves as a watchdog that oversees government actions and criticize policies that are not in the public interest.

However, there are obstacles in building political discourse on social media. Social media is often a source of information that is not properly verified. As a result, the information circulating can influence people's perceptions with incorrect data. Not only this, the spread of fake news and manipulation of information on social media can influence people's perceptions with incorrect data. (Judijanto et al., n.d., 2023)

In addition, the spread of disinformation and the creation of social media algorithmic traps can polarize the political sphere and undermine democratic norms. It is

necessary to enhance digital applications to accommodate public participation and sustain democracy.

In Indonesia, discourse on social media is primarily regulated by the Electronic Information and Transaction Law (ITE Law) No. 19 of 2016. This ITE Law covers various aspects including the use of social media. Article 27 paragraph 3 of the ITE Law regulates the prohibition of creating and/or disseminating information that contains provocation or incitement that creates hatred or hostility of certain individuals or groups of people based on ethnicity, religion, race, and intergroup (sara). (Junaidi, Sukarna, and Sadono 2020).

In the next article, article 28 of the ITE Law, it also explains the prohibition of sending and/or disseminating electronic information that has the purpose of offending and/or demeaning a person. Article 45 paragraph (1) of the ITE Law also stipulates a maximum imprisonment of six years and/or a maximum fine of Rp1 billion for those who violate the provisions of the ITE Law, including through social media. However, the implementation of the ITE Law is often controversial because some of its provisions are considered ambiguous and can be misused to suppress freedom of expression. (Rajab, 2018)

Although the role of the media in politics is very important, the laws and regulations formed have not been able to solve the problems that occur in the field. Such as media bias, hoax news and political polarization reinforced by social media. In addition, media ownership that is concentrated in a few conglomerates also raises concerns about the objectivity and independence of the news. This raises questions about the extent to which social media can build a healthy and objective political discourse in Indonesia.

It is therefore important to understand how social media shapes political discourse in Indonesia today, identify existing challenges and problems, and explore ways to enhance the positive role of social media in democracy.

By understanding these dynamics, it is expected that

constructive solutions can be found to improve the media and political ecosystem in Indonesia.

METHODS

The method used in this research is a qualitative approach with a literature review method to examine the reality of social media, discourse and politics. Literature review is a systematic process for collecting, evaluating, and synthesizing literature relevant to a particular research topic. (Dolly et al. 2021) This is an important step in research that helps researchers understand the existing research landscape, analyze existing understanding of the topic, and identify knowledge gaps that can be filled with new research. Data collection techniques with documentation from journals on google scholar. Data analysis techniques with critical review. Critical review is a process of evaluation and critical analysis of a particular work or topic. After all the data is collected, the next step is to analyze the data to conclude. To get correct and precise results in analyzing data, the data analysis technique uses an in-depth discussion of the content of written or printed information in the Journal.

RESULT

THE ROLE OF MEDIA ON POLITICAL ATTITUDES

The influence of social media on political attitudes is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon. In the context of digital democracy, social media is not only a channel of communication, but also a space where political identities are formed, confirmed and challenged. Social media is a platform that cannot be controlled by anyone, including by the government in power. Based on data from the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII), in 2021 the number of internet users

in Indonesia reached 196.7 million people or around 71.5% of the total population. (Endah Cahyaning Naya et al. 2023)

This has become an important center of attention because in some countries, freedom of expression in conventional media is still limited and controlled by the government or large media companies. However, in social media, individuals have greater access and can express their opinions without any censorship or restrictions. In this political context, it allows people to talk directly to who they want, whether it is the leaders in their respective countries or people who have no interest in them, in order to convey ideas, ideas, criticism and suggestions that are stronger through this social media.

Take a closer look at what is happening in cyberspace today. Social media allows for the rapid and widespread dissemination of political information. Political news, both factual and disinformation, can quickly reach a large audience. Social media users are often exposed to political opinion news through posts, retweets and shares from people in their network. This is certainly different from traditional media where information is more structured and filtered through a strict editorial process.

The impact generated by the speed of information spread quickly and widely on social media also produces mixed impacts. On the one hand, the fast and widespread speed of information allows people to more easily access the latest political news and issues. It is also useful for increasing political awareness among users, ranging from those who are less interested or less informed about politics can become more involved in political participation discussions.

On the other hand, this speed of information also allows public opinion to be changed and patterned quickly as well.

Intensive political discourse on social media can influence people's perception of certain issues. Public opinion can change as new information, political scandals, or comments from influential figures circulate. This speed gives room for dynamic change in the political viewsociety.

The political discourse built in this social media era takes a central role in driving the willful blindness of common sense and appealing to emotional-based arguments. The discourse built is well polished so that emotional truths are able to break through common sense and attract attention. Indirectly, social media presents an issue with a certain focus and perspective, which in turn influences the way the issue is understood by the audience. In social media, framing is once done by individual users and groups that have a certain political agenda. ahead of the 2024 General Election in Indonesia, government supporters often frame the success of current government policies. For example, massive infrastructure development programs, toll road projects, airports and ports. These are often portrayed as evidence of the government's success in improving the national economy and connectivity.

That they represent true religious values. These narratives built on social media then give rise to a broader narrative about the political situation. This narrative often reflects the vision or mission that certain candidates want to convey to the public.

The impact of effective political framing and narrative can strengthen voters' political identity, making them more loyal to a particular party or candidate. Powerful and resonant narratives can mobilize the masses to participate in the political process, whether through voting, campaigning or protesting. However, framing is often impacted by the spread of disinformation.

False or misleading information that can muddy political discourse and exacerbate polarization.

POLITICAL POLARIZATION AND ECHO CHAMBERS

Talking about the role of social media in political discourse is very dilemmatic. The relationship that is built is due to the framing failure of government in handling issues such as corruption, unemployment, and social injustice. They highlight corruption scandals and policies that are considered unfavorable to the small people as evidence of government failure. Religion is often used in framing Indonesian politics. Some politicians and groups may frame the election as a religious election, moral, or religious struggle and claim information attitude of social media which does not fully build a neutral attitude from the intervention of capital patronage. This is certainly contrary to social media, which is referred to as the fifth pillar in building democracy after the triaspolitical institution and the mass media.

Social media that is expected to function as a watchdog in power to check and balance the state and society. However, it is only a mouthpiece for the ruling party. Social media should be a forum for the public to translate the activities that occur in this life in the nation and state into proper information consumption through electronic media. This situation of social media towards politics has started in 2018 until after the 2019 presidential election, where it was filled with boring discourse. Starting from the distortion of presidential candidate figures, election fraud through quick counts, and the justification of people power. The discourse that is echoed is very far from the competition of ideas, ideas, and policies for the future direction of the Indonesian nation. Instead, the discourse that is built is more directed towards the interests with their

political rhetorical battles. These discourses are built on an empty foundation without data. Through this, interested parties bring people's perceptions towards being reconstructed and then consider this discourse a fact that must be believed so that post-truth occurs among the public. Thus causing a truth to be considered an opinion or expression of hidden personal interests. (Barzilai and Chinn 2020)

Such a space will pave the way for the emergence of radical post-truth movements, including lies, obscurantism, and extremism. This situation is then exploited by political party elites who fight for victory and accuse the relevant institutions of lying. The aspect of lies, errors, and shadows is considered a flawed and unethical rhetorical strategy because it is unfavorable when compared to logical opinions and general truths. However, this reality distortion strategy is often used in the political arena to trick audiences who are indifferent to the truth and change public perceptions according to the perceptions of interested groups. This post-truth era is an era in which objective facts have less influence in shaping public opinion than emotions and personal beliefs. (Castañeda et al. 2019)

A condition where objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than emotions and personal beliefs. In this context, social media plays an important role as the main platform for information dissemination and disinformation. Social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram have become important channels for political communication and news dissemination. The speed and reach of social media allow information to spread without the rigorous vetting process that traditional media does. The algorithms used by social media platforms also tend to ignore the accuracy of information and amplify content that triggers emotional engagement.

The unchanging nature of bullshit in this post-truth regime is that there is no relation to facts, reality, and truth among political rhetoric. The majority of the public is considered a weak audience because it is vulnerable to nonsense. More interesting in 2024 politics is the large number of voter participation dominated by the Millennial Generation and Generation Z (Gen Z), where the population percentage of these two generations is relatively large in the demographic structure in Indonesia and these groups are considered echo chambers which are often only exposed to information that is in line with their own views. This causes users to see content that reinforces their views more often and rarely different views. (Cinelli et al., n.d., 2021)

This mechanism is formed due to several things; first, the Personalization Algorithm: where the algorithm is designed to increase user engagement by displaying content that matches their interests. This means users are more likely to see content from sources they already approve of or follow. Second, social homophily. Where users are more likely to interact with individuals who share similar views and interests, this strengthening echo chambers due to discussion occurs within like-minded groups. Third, confirmation bias. Humans tend to seek and agree with information that supports their beliefs and ignore information that contradicts them.

As a result, political polarization can lead to a more fragmented society, with each group developing their own version of the narrative and truth. This polarization also increases distrust and hostility towards other groups. Dissenting views are often perceived as a threat, rather than as differences that can be understood and discussed. (Body Note). So this condition is used as a vehicle for destabilizing or even destroying the idea of truth. In addition, discussions that occur (Body Note).

EFFORTS TO OVERCOME THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA DISCOURSE

Addressing the impact of political discourse on social media requires a comprehensive and collaborative approach. From improving media literacy to proper regulation, the active role of social media platforms, technology and communities, all these aspects need to be coordinated to create a healthy and constructive political discourse environment. The ways to overcome it are as follows; first, by increasing digital literacy through political and social media education to understand how social media works and how to use it.

How to verify the information received. Second, paying attention to inclusiveness and fairness in political participation on social media and involving the entire spectrum of society in discussions and political decision-making. Third, in using social media, users use features on social media such as polls, stories, live streaming to interact directly with voters. Fourth, improve political education through programs that help people understand how the political system works and how to influence political decisions. Fifth, helping to re-verify information that has been disseminated in the public for its veracity. By developing these strategies, the use of social media in political campaigns can be managed more effectively to promote healthy political participation and respect for the diversity of citizens' political views.

THE IMPACT OF UU ITE ON POLITICAL DISCOURSE

The implementation of the ITE Law has a very significant impact on the media and political discourse in Indonesia. On the one hand, ITE Law can be used to silence criticism of the government or certain parties. Some parties consider that the ITE Law can be used to suppress freedom of the press and freedom of expression, especially

if used disproportionately. The other side, with the ITE Law, the media is encouraged to be more careful in presenting news and ensuring that the information conveyed is based on valid facts. As a result, the ITE Law encourages the public to increase digital literacy and the ability to critique the information received. However, there are opportunities. There are challenges faced in the field in the application of the ITE Law regarding the role of the media in building political discourse in Indonesia. In terms of interpretation. Articles in the ITE Law are often interpreted variously, thus creating legal uncertainty for the media. These various interpretations will also lead to the potential misuse of the ITE Law, both to suppress criticism and press freedom. Of course, this is still an issue that increasingly needs to be addressed in this country.

CONCLUSION

Social media has great potential to shape political discourse and influence the democratic process in Indonesia. While social media can strengthen political participation and democratize information, challenges such as disinformation and polarization require serious attention. Through better media literacy, proper regulation, and collaborative efforts between various stakeholders, the negative impacts of social media can be minimized, and its positive potential can be harnessed. can be maximized to support discourse healthy and constructive politics. Supported by the ITE Law, which has a role in regulating the media and influencing political discourse in Indonesia. While this law can provide protection against misleading information, it is important to ensure that its application does not inhibit freedom of expression. Thus, social media can continue to play an important role in building healthy and constructive political discourse in Indonesia.

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