The Role of Social Media in Increasing Political Literacy of Beginning Voters

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Abstract

Social media has been a significant influence in forming young voters' political knowledge and engagement, hence improving their political literacy. This study aims to determine social media's role in increasing young voters' political literacy. The method used in this study is a literature review. The stages used in the literature review are article collection, reduction, display, organizing and discussing, and drawing conclusions. This study showed that social media has become a new domain for voters, especially first-time voters with competing candidate pairs. First, social media's role in political literacy is as an agent for disseminating information about political processes and development policies. Second, they become agents of accentuating views, opinions, and even people's attitudes toward certain political phenomena. Third, social media is a public space for free discussion and political literacy. Fourth, social media has contributed to promoting democracy by carrying out the function of social control, for example, in the E-KTP corruption case.

Keywords: Social Media, Political Literacy, Beginner Voters.

Introduction

The development of technology and information in Indonesian society is rapid, covering almost all aspects of life, including social and political life. Social media is an integral part of the socio-political life of the Indonesian people, and the topic adapts to technological and information developments that are widely used by the public. Therefore, social media must be maximized and adapted to their needs as a medium of interaction and communication. Social media is becoming an increasingly globalized and entrenched phenomenon. Its existence is increasingly inseparable from the way humans communicate. Along with the rapid growth of social media in Indonesia, social media users are increasing yearly.

According to survey data from the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII), internet users in Indonesia reached 215.63 million people in the 2022-2023. This number increased by 2.67% compared to the previous period of 210.03 million users. The number of internet users is equivalent to 78.19% of Indonesia's total population of 275.77 million. For information, the trend of internet penetration in Indonesia is increasing from year to year. In 2018, internet penetration in the country reached 64.8%, and its level rose to 73.7% in 2019-2020. Then, in 2021-2022, the internet penetration rate will increase again. This time, the penetration rate reached 77.02% and will be at 80% in 2022-2023. This means Indonesians are increasingly literate with the internet (Finaka, 2023).

Basically, the media has four main functions: providing information, education, entertainment, and social control. Media also has certain conditions, namely freedom, facts, and completeness. However, some media owners have to leave this situation due to pressure from several parties. However, when it comes to politics, the media can only run away with using political players to market their agendas, parties, and political ideologies. Finally, these media become a form of political communication to create political conditions, public opinion, and influence for every society. After all, society's greater reliance on the media can directly impact the public through the news being broadcast, even if it is not true in the news. It shows that this media really has a big impression on people's lives (Budiardjo, 2013).

Today, the development of mass technology, especially new media and social media, consciously or unconsciously, it influences people's political participation. Beginner voters who grew up with technology, the internet, and the current all-digital conditions will easily participate in the upcoming 2024 elections so that everyone will be free to express their opinions with unimaginable speed and scope of discussion. According to Sukmajati et al., the young generation as first-time voters is an element of citizens with weak political literacy (Ridha & Riwanda, 2020). First-time voters often need to consider a farsighted vision before making their choices based on a majority. They lack electoral awareness, cannot escape the intimidation of numbers and ideas, do not understand the meaning and consequences of their voices, and have no resistance to transactional political attacks.

Low political literacy is caused by several factors, namely political parties, politicians, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) engaged in socio-political fields that do not increase the political literacy of first-time voters. Rahman and Sunarno revealed that weak political literacy is also caused by a lack of political socialization and role models for political elites (Ridha & Riwanda, 2020). Some politicians will easily use beginner voters with low political literacy to carry out cunning and deceptive propaganda (Tam, 2016). Politicians send political content in videos and

images to first-time voters more often than other voters or experienced voters (Ohme, 2019). This shows that during general elections, first-time voters are often the priority target of the campaign.

In stark contrast to novice voters with a sufficient level of literacy. They can independently provide plausible reasons for voting for specific people or parties (Pontes et al. (Ridha & Riwanda, 2020)). Citizens with good political knowledge also participate significantly in traditional and unconventional political activities, such as voting, political discussions, expressing opinions through the media, protesting, submitting petitions, etc. Beginner voters with adequate political literacy can become rational voters. Therefore, political knowledge to increase the political literacy of novice voters is essential and urgent.

Given the current conditions, political knowledge will be readily available. With technology, everything can be found more quickly, especially information about politics. One of the political knowledge is the basis of one's behavior (Nugraha, 2020). Jack Dennis (Aziz et al., 2022) suggests three variables related to political knowledge: knowledge about government, knowledge about the rules of the political game, and knowledge about environmental and social goals. As such, this understanding can be interpreted as political knowledge resulting from understanding government, regulating political behavior (eg, laws), and learning about environmental and societal objectives. Therefore, public information must be filtered so that the information obtained does not make someone's behavior worse.

Political literacy is one of the efforts to increase the political knowledge of the younger generation. According to Bernard in (Aziz et al., 2022), defining political literacy is implementing a combination of knowledge, skills, and attitudes regarding politics and small things such as political issues and influencing oneself and others in decision-making. The existence of this political literacy indirectly leads young people to get political education, which helps them participate in political activities. Departing from the problems above, the younger generation is a generation that has been literate in technology since childhood, so it must be able to study the role of social media in increasing their political literacy and activities during the series towards the implementation of the upcoming 2024 elections. Thus, the researcher raises research on how the role of social media is in increasing the political literacy of young voters so that researchers know the extent of the role of social media as a source of political knowledge on the political literacy of the younger generation towards the implementation of the upcoming 2024 election.

Literature Review
a. Role Theory
Role theory in general, focuses on one of the most essential characteristics of social behavior, namely the fact that humans behave in different and predictable ways depending on the situation and the social identities each has (Biddle; (Prayudi et al., 2019)). This theory explains the role concept with the initial assumption that people occupy a particular social position with expectations for their behavior and those of others around them. Expectations are then interpreted as one's beliefs about personal behavior and beliefs about or about other people. In addition, roles must reflect one's position in the social system and are related to rights and obligations as well as powers and responsibilities (Agustina, 2009). Interaction between individuals in this social system then occurs in certain ways by playing each role they have to anticipate other people's behavior in their environment.

b. Social Media
Mandibergh argues that "social media is media that facilitates collaboration between users who produce content (user-generated content)" (Nasrullah; Ratnamulyani &Jadii, 2018). Meanwhile, Boyd explained that social media is a collection of software that allows individuals and communities to gather, share, communicate, and sometimes collaborate or play with each other. Social media has the strength of user-generated content (UGC) where content is generated by users, not by editors, as in mass media institutions (Nasrullah; Ratnamulyani &Jadii, 2018).

From these two definitions, it can be concluded that social media is internet technology-based media (online media) that allows a person to interact, communicate, collaborate, and share with others. Moreover, its users easily participate in it, share, and create messages. In this case, several social media sites, including Blog, Twitter, Facebook WashApps, BMM, Line, Wikipedia, and others, are popular today.

c. The Role of Social Media in Politics
As explained, social media is online media that uses internet technology to support social interaction, transforming communication into a two-way interactive dialogue. In its development, social media has become an essential and effective tool in the process of political communication, especially in the context of election campaigns, which can bridge politicians with their voters, namely between the media and the media remote and mass. Therefore, communicators can use social media to communicate with their supporters or voters, especially to build or shape public opinion by garnering massive political support. The use of social media has also increased political communication networks, political relations, and people's political participation in elections. We often encounter this in the political campaigns of prominent candidates who appear in primary regional elections (Pilkada) and presidential candidates in presidential and parliamentary elections (Pileg).

d. Political Literacy
Bernard Crick (Putri; Katarudin & Putri, 2018) Political literacy is implementing a compound of knowledge, skills, and attitudes regarding politics from small things such as political issues to influencing oneself and others in making decisions. With this political literacy, novice voters can get political education that helps first-time voters participate in political activities related to several aspects, such as the concept of the state, power, decision-making, and general policy.

Political literacy, according to Jenni S Bev, is a skill and knowledge for citizens to participate in government and is related to the implementation of state administration. In the implementation of elections, political literacy is divided into two types: procedural and substantial. Substantial literacy, namely understanding the importance of the urgency of political participation, while procedural, namely understanding the implementation process and procedures (Rosalia in Katarudin & Putri, 2018).

From the various concepts of political literacy above, civics education is an effort to provide understanding to the public about politics so that they can participate in political activities. Political literacy is also an attempt to interpret information or views about politics and everyday political issues so that people know politics, political participation, and issues related to politics so that they can choose political situations according to their understanding.

e. Novice Voters

According to PKPU Number 11 of 2018 concerning the Compilation of Domestic Voter Lists in holding general elections, Article 1, paragraph 28 explains that citizens who are 17 years of age or older or are married or have been married are called voters (PKPU NO 11, 2018). Meanwhile, first-time voters consist of people who have met the requirements to vote and are exercising their right to vote for the first time. They are usually students aged 17-21 years. However, other young people will exercise their right to vote in elections for the first time, namely early semester students and other youth groups who in the previous election period, were not even 17 years old (Module 1 KPU, Voters For Beginners 2010).

There are three categories of first-time voters in Indonesia. First, rational voters, namely voters who choose a party based on in-depth assessment and analysis. Second, emotional critical voters, namely voters who are still idealistic and uncompromising. Third, novice voters, namely voters who vote for the first time because they are just entering the voting age (Rachmat & Esther, 2016). In this study, the notion of a novice voter is used for voters who are voting for the first time because they are just entering the voting age.

Method

The method used in this study is a literature review. A literature review is the first important step in preparing a research plan. A literature review is a literature search and research by reading various books, journals, and other publications related to research topics to produce an article regarding a particular topic or issue (Marzali, 2016). The stages used in the literature review are as follows:

1) Article Collection (Search and download articles). At this stage of article collection, it is done by searching and downloading articles via Google Solar by typing keywords related to the topic or research title. In this case, the keywords are the application of integrated learning in elementary schools.
2) Article Reduction (Reducing the number of articles based on the variables in the title). Article reduction means summarizing, choosing the main things, focusing on the important things, looking for themes and patterns, and removing unnecessary ones. Thus, reduced articles will provide a clear picture and make it easier for researchers to collect further data and look for it if needed.
3) Article Display (Compilation and arrangement of selected articles). After the article is reduced, the next step is to display or present the article. The presentation of this article is done in the form of tables, brief descriptions, and relationships between variables.
4) Organizing and Discussion. At this stage, organizing and discussing is carried out based on the type of literature review used. In this case, the selected literature review is in the form of a theoretical study. This type of literature review in the form of a theoretical study is a special study in which the author describes several theories or concepts that focus on a particular topic and compares these theories or concepts based on their assumptions, logical consistency, and scope of explanation.
5) Drawing Conclusions Drawing conclusions is made based on the results of the organizing and discussion that has been done before.

Results and Discussion

RI General Election Commission (KPU) member August Mellaz said young age groups would dominate the composition of voters in the 2024 election. This group is said to have reached 60 percent of the total valid vote owners (Tika Ayu & Febrian, 2023). Of course, this is not a small number in the political contestation of elections, especially in Indonesia. Facing this large number, several parties warned that novice voters would use their right to vote to make wise choices. Information about presidential and vice-presidential candidates and legislative candidates who will join the political contest in 2024 is essential for voters, especially first-time voters because most first-time voters still need more information about choosing who deserves to be voted for in the election. But nowadays, information can be easily obtained from several existing sources.

Information sources are information processed in a form that has real value in decision-making. The information obtained can have a short-term (immediate effect), leading to changes or improvements to the information. Mastering technology and the internet since childhood and in today's all-digital conditions, it is very easy for first-time voters to participate in the 2024 elections. When it comes to sources of information for first-time voters, social media is a source of information that first-time voters widely use; this is in line with research conducted by Gita Isyanawulan et al. in 2023 entitled "Political Literacy Education for Students of SMA Negeri 25 Banyuwangi Regency". This can be seen from the results of the evaluation at the time of service, which is illustrated in Figure 1 below:
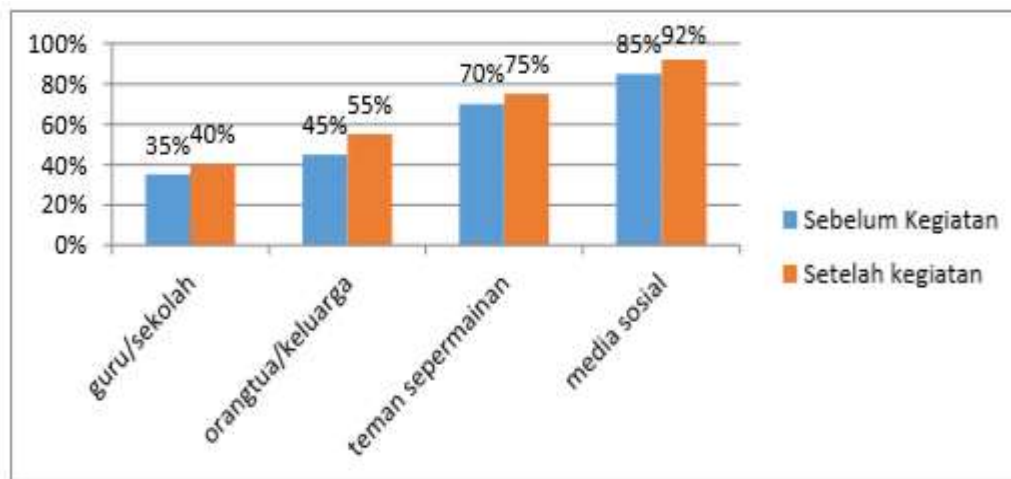
Gambar 1. Diagram Alir Metode Budidamber

(Source: research results of Isyanawulan et al., 2023)

Based on the observations (Isyanawulan et al., 2023), students' voting behavior tends to be obtained from social media rather than those closest to them. This is supported by the notion that it is easier for students to find information through social media such as Google, Facebook, Twitter, etc. It can be seen from the graph that students' political preferences and information were primarily obtained from social media, namely 85% in the period before the activity and 92% after the activity. Social media can be a platform or gateway for users, in this case students, to learn about politics or Indonesia's political system. In addition, the sophistication of information on social media is instrumental for students to increase their knowledge about the politics of their country, especially Indonesia.

Ahmad Nurcholis and Tri Rizki Putra obtained the same observation results in 2020 with the research title "The Influence of Social Media on Beginner Voter Participation in the 2019 Presidential Election: Studies on FISIPOL UGM Students". The results of the study show that social media is in the first place as a source for obtaining information on Candidates for President and Vice President in the 2019 Election with around 95% or 57 respondents, followed by television with 73.3% or 44 respondents, family 48.3% or 29 respondents (Nurcholis & Rizki Putra, 2020). These results indicate that social media has become a new domain for voters, especially first-time voters with competing candidate pairs. This is illustrated by the fact that the average social media user is a novice or new voter. Candidates take advantage of this fact to win votes from first-time voters by increasing the number of campaign shares shared via social media. Of course, this is a very profitable site for potential partners without spending too much money, but it has very significant consequences for them.

As for the role of social media in political literacy, first, as an agent for disseminating information about political processes and development policies. Second, they become agents of accentuating views, opinions and even people's attitudes towards certain political phenomena. Third, social media is a public space for free discussion and political literacy. Fourth, social media has contributed to the promotion of democracy by carrying out the function of social control, for example the E-KTP corruption case (Yuliyanto, 2018). The government and society in general support the freedom to use social media in a positive way, even though recently it has been rife with SARA fraud and hate speech.

In addition, political education is needed so that students, as the first generation, can easily understand, observe, internalize, and bring political attitudes and actions with them. Social media is also the most prominent medium because educated and ICT-savvy people use social media to satisfy their curiosity and interest in the country's politics and democratic practices. First-time voters, or Generation Z born in the 21st century, have found themselves in the competitive political climate of the Internet age. Unlike previous incumbent voters who used to get information from print and electronic media campaigns, generation Z has now used online media to get their information from the start.

Studies show that young voters are at the forefront of using new media to access information. Young people are also at the forefront of new media selection innovation and participate in campaigns through new media domains (Baumgartner and Morris; Yuliyanto, 2018). Research results from the Department of Communication Studies in 2017 show that the majority of Generation Z (49 percent) view politics as a matter of government and power struggles between party figures. There are 35 percent of them who interpret politics as a strategy and a way of realizing the public interest through policies such as laws. As for those who interpret politics as a matter of political parties and elections, there are 10 percent. Other findings show that 6 percent interpret politics as a struggle for positions and positions in government and the DPR. Interestingly, only 35 percent of respondents saw politics as a positive thing, namely strategies and ways to realize the public interest (Yuliyanto, 2018).

This opinion arose before novice voters dealt with political competence. Political literacy is disseminating information and discussing various political topics to become politically literate individuals, intelligent citizens, critical, mature, and constructive about politics and power. The 2017 Communication Research Department's results showed a response from young people after receiving political education. Up to 40 percent rate civic education as an effort to raise individual awareness about ways to participate in politics, such as elections. In addition, 28 percent know more about activities related to various policies and their dynamics. The remaining 20 percent consider civics education training to know and communicate politics for the greater good, primarily through social and mainstream media (Yuliyanto, 2018).

From the research results of previous researchers, we can conclude that the role of social media in increasing voter

literacy for beginners is vital and must be utilized by election organizers and local elections, namely the General Election Commission (KPU) and the Election Supervisory Body (Bawaslu). As was done by the General Election Commission (KPU) and the Election Supervisory Board (Bawaslu) of Blora Regency to be even more active in creating educational or informational content on social media (Aziz et al., 2022).

KPU and Bawaslu social media are critical in providing political information and knowledge to Generation Z. These two agencies are the main executors of each series of elections. The KPU is quoted on its official website in Article 12 of Law No. 7 of 2017 concerning General Elections. One of the KPU's obligations is to publish the implementation of elections and elections related to KPU's duties and authorities in matters related to elections and/or KPU's duties and authorities (Kpu.go.id, 2017). Bawaslu also plays an important role in organizing the 2020 Pilkada based on the mandate of the Bawaslu Law Number 7 of 2017 concerning Legislative Elections, which includes task Number 2, namely preventing and eradicating election fraud and processes. It disputes that election organizers can create social media content to fulfill their duties and powers as long as first-time voters dominate the use of social media in everyday life. They are willing to spend time using social media. So, it must be accepted that social media will become a means of political literacy ahead of the 2024 elections.

Conclusions

From the results and discussion described above, social media has become a new domain for voters, especially first-time voters with competing candidate pairs. This is illustrated by the average social media user being a novice or a new voter. Candidates take advantage of this fact to win votes from first-time voters by increasing the number of campaign shares shared via social media. Therefore, election organizers, especially the KPU and Bawaslu, can use social media as a source of information and political literacy for first-time voters. First, social media's role in political literacy is as an agent for disseminating information about political processes and development policies. Second, they become agents of accentuating views, opinions, and even people's attitudes toward certain political phenomena. Third, social media is a public space for free discussion and political literacy. Fourth, social media has contributed to promoting democracy by carrying out the function of social control, for example, the E-KTP corruption case.

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