

The Role of Social Media as a Medium of Democracy in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT - The role of social media, which at first was merely a platform for self-existence and personal expression, has now evolved significantly into a powerful instrument capable of influencing the political dynamics and democratic climate of a country. In the current digital era, the use of social media is no longer limited to social interaction but has transformed into a strategic tool that can shape public opinion, mobilize political support, and facilitate civic engagement. This research seeks to describe how democracy adapts and thrives within this digital environment by highlighting the contribution of social media as an enabler of the democratic process. The study employs a qualitative approach using the literature review method to explore relevant theories and empirical findings concerning the intersection between social media and democracy. The findings reveal that social media platforms provide a vast space for communication, interaction, and dissemination of information among users, making it easier for individuals, groups, or political actors to build networks, share political views, and rally support across geographical and social boundaries. Social media has emerged as an alternative and complementary channel for political participation, which strengthens democratic practices and holds the potential to enhance the overall quality of democracy by making political processes more inclusive, transparent, and responsive. Furthermore, the interactive and open nature of social media empowers citizens to monitor, control, and criticize the performance of the government and public officials in real time.

Keywords: social media; digital age; democracy

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Introduction

The development of social media in the millennial era has had a significant impact on all aspects of people's lives and the power of social media is only felt in its social aspects, if initially it was used as a tool to interact with friends, relatives, and social media users and media in general. But now it has been widely used as a campaign tool to reach public participation (Putri et al., 2016; Rayyan, 2022; Sinamo et al., 2025). The rapid development of technology has made everything open and easily accessible. The revolution in communication technology has been produced since the 1990s, especially with the spread of new media which has had a major influence on democratic ideology, so that people find it easier to access and obtain information through the media. The emergence of new media then made the younger generation participate in the development of democracy in several countries in Indonesia which have carried out many political campaigns through social media, both Facebook, Instagram and Twitter (Polii et al., 2020; Sari & Zulkarnain, 2024).

The use of social media in the development of democracy in Indonesia is certainly not a necessity, but in the current conditions, political elites and political figures have used it as a tool to reach sympathizers in society and its users can easily participate because of its very rapid development and easy access so that the use of Social Media in the government environment is growing very rapidly. However, there is still a need for learning and improvement, Mickoleit, (2014) stated that the challenge in utilizing social media is that there are still some people who have not been reached by social media channels, this is due to the low level of education and income which is an obstacle to social absorption in various countries, thus limiting public participation in utilizing social media channels for political interests. Soit can be shown that social media for certain political purposes directly leads to reconsideration or change of political views on social media.

Social media in a political context according to Sáez-Martín et al., (2014) stating the color of participation through social media communication tools has become increasingly apparent in recent years, public opinion conveyed through the development of social media often has a big influence, so that social communication tools through media are currently often used by many elite political officials. The use of this media is used because this service is more easily accessible to the public and the government so that it gets a lot of feedback from residents and on the other hand because followers and likes from the public are also in the government's interest.

This shows that the government has the tools to maintain direct relationships with community groups. More specifically, it can be seen that the development of social media has had the greatest influence in government, in research Mainka et al., (2015) revealed that the social media applications most frequently used by the government are Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook. However, among all these services, the most striking is YouTube, this is because YouTube services are very complete for sharing videos with long duration and a more attractive appearance, it's just that the government doesn't have many subscribers. The same thing was also conveyed Diehl et al., (2016) application usage because people easily learn and expand their knowledge about social media behavior for political services as a result of using social media for news and social interaction.

The role of social media in creating social interactions that can be used as a tool of democracy is to become a social media interaction that emphasizes social relations with groups, both organizational and activist relations, and emphasizes discussions with peer groups

(Noorikhsan et al., 2023). Furthermore, social media is considered as a tool to expand social networks, and increase the ease of obtaining information. More broadly, social media is then seen as a tool to make it easier for the government to communicate with the public, such as in research Spiliotopoulou et al., (2014) stated that social media was initially only used by private companies in marketing and as a network to their customers, but now it is increasingly apparent that government agencies are also utilizing social media, especially in the process of introducing themselves or political bargaining, so that the government can easily communicate with the public. Community involvement in the democratic process by utilizing social media as a way to learn about the political process shows that democracy can develop with positive values because the role of social media is so fast with very easy access that it can reduce community involvement so that they are not directly involved when there are general elections or regional head elections.

Method

The method applied by the author in this paper is a qualitative descriptive method, which is carried out through a comprehensive literature study combined with a phenomenological approach to explore and understand the reality of the research subject from various perspectives. This approach refers to the thoughts of Lewis (2015), which emphasize the importance of exploring the meaning behind experiences and phenomena by synthesizing diverse studies and literature sources. In this context, the author seeks to deepen understanding by systematically reviewing scientific journals, official documents, credible websites, and other relevant data sources that are closely related to the research topic, with the ultimate goal of producing high-quality and meaningful research outcomes.

The process of data collection is focused on secondary data obtained from these sources, which are then subjected to systematic analysis and interpretation. The analysis technique applied follows the model developed by Miles & Huberman (2014), which includes several essential stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and data verification. Data reduction involves selecting, simplifying, and organizing data relevant to the research objectives to ensure the focus remains clear and concise. The next stage, data presentation, involves compiling the reduced data into structured forms such as tables, narratives, or conceptual frameworks to facilitate understanding and interpretation. The final stage is data verification, where the validity of the data is re-examined to ensure the reliability of the information and the accuracy of the research conclusions. Through this rigorous process, the research is expected to produce comprehensive conclusions and new findings that contribute to scientific development and can be useful for readers, especially in providing new perspectives and insights regarding the phenomena being studied.

Result and Discussion

Democracy

Democracy is a system that develops and evolves not only as a tool or method but also as a goal. One of the variables for democracy to be realized is the formation of a government that originates from the people and is oriented towards the interests of the people (Jeffares & Skelcher, 2011; Khan et al., 2021; Marshall, 2011). The principle of popular sovereignty, often called democracy, means that the people themselves have the authority to determine how they want to be led and by whom. However, the people were unable to organize or articulate their own

interests. As a goal, democracy is idealized as a system that ensures the continuity of popular control over public affairs based on the principle of equality of citizens.

Democracy is idealized as a form of guarantee of continuous supervision of public affairs based on the principle of equality of citizens (Casassas & De Wispelaere, 2016; Chambers, 2017; Olsen, 2016). This is closely related to the issue of representation and participation. Representation is related to the guarantee of every citizen's right to realize their interests. While participation is related to the guarantee of every citizen's right to actively participate in the political process that determines the creation, implementation, and supervision of public policy. Democratic representative and participatory institutions must guarantee the rights and interests of every citizen. In both aspects, democracy is limited to a series of democratic procedures, and therefore will move away from true democracy.

The development of democracy in the digital era cannot be separated from the influence of social media, which, despite its growing role, still faces limitations in shaping political attitudes (Curran, 2018; Gilardi & Trechsel, 2023; Van Dijk, 2012). The use of social media is often associated with marginalized or extreme political views, which results in a negative relationship between social media use, political values, and broader social concerns. On the one hand, social media functions as a platform for users to build and maintain social connections, but at the same time, it serves as a public space where dominant political discourses can be questioned or opposed. In addition, research shows that social media provides real potential for users to access and learn political information in the modern communication environment. However, the extent to which this opportunity is utilized depends on individual awareness and engagement, as many users do not fully realize the role of social media in shaping their political knowledge and orientation (Bode, 2016; Lee et al., 2018).

Participation is an important concept that always appears in discussions of democracy. However, each concept is the fruit of two different ideas. Participation grows in the tradition of Republican thought. Participation is the principle of openness for all individuals to master all public affairs so that the public can know how the work done can be understood and implemented properly according to its function, while representation is related to the recognition and fulfillment of individual rights. Therefore, in the discourse of democracy, the term direct democracy emerged, which includes two important variants, namely participatory democracy and delegative democracy as well as representative democracy (De Smedt et al., 2024; Hertting & Kugelberg, 2017).

In this regard, identifying who *Demos* (the people) is becomes very fundamental. From the formulation of *demos* (the people) it can be seen that the aspect of increasing participation and aggregation of public interests through democratic representation mechanisms can be implemented better. The more limited the *demos* (people), the more limited the public interests that can be implemented, especially the democratic process. And the more limited the public interests, the more democratic procedures will only benefit some members of society. In other words, groups of people whose interests are not represented will be excluded from the political process.

One way to measure socio-political interactions in the use of social media is to take a conceptual approach formed from the interactions between organizations, norms, and electoral political rules in the use of digital media. Furthermore, similar things were stated (Gibson, 2015) as the right thing to conceptualize because it can measure the emergence of a new style of political

campaign that is able to improve the democratic process from voters to grassroots supporters through digital devices because what is intended to be achieved can assess the extent to which the latest developments in social media promotion are a new form of citizen-based campaign that challenges the top-down management approach that is managed professionally to dominate the campaign because social media can be integrated and strengthened by presenting several suggestions for further research.

Social media is a tool that is developing very rapidly and its benefits are felt by society today, because social media can be used as a place or tool, and also where society can use it as a means of communicating and participating in social interaction. As explained Sobaci & Eryigit, (2015) this study seeks to make a specific contribution to the local e-democracy literature by focusing on investigating the implementation of e-democracy. This means that in its development, social media is also an internet-based application that builds the foundation of Web 2.0 ideology and technology, and now the 4.0 revolution has developed which allows the creation and exchange of the use of election systems using e-democracy as used in developed countries.

In another theory, it is proposed Fuchs (2014) to link social media and politics which can explain various changes and simple observations. Phillips (2016) explains something similar, saying that the emergence of social media such as Facebook can be used as a source by political organizations to educate the masses. Because, social media can more easily select those whose views are usually excluded from political discussions. Because, social media can also be a liberating technology that introduces a theoretical model of public service media that is used as a basis for identifying this, with the conclusion that these limitations can only be overcome if the colonization of social media in the world of life is politically challenged, so that social media and the internet become public services that produce positive content.

The relationship between social media, digital networks, and social movements has become an important focus in understanding contemporary activism, particularly in how these platforms contribute to civic engagement and democratic participation. Social media such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter are not only used for communication but also serve various functions that support social and political activities. These platforms enable users to follow public debates, monitor social and political developments, expand the scope of emergency response, facilitate resource development and collaboration, generate important public discourse, and enhance research efforts. The utilization of these digital spaces has the potential to foster forms of participation that help bridge the existing gap between individuals as mere consumers of public services and individuals as citizens actively involved in local democratic processes (Cammaerts, 2015).

The development of web-based systems is considered an effective approach to fostering active public participation by promoting democratic practices such as elections and political campaigns. This idea is supported by the view that social media democracy serves as an alternative tool to maximize public engagement, especially through direct political involvement, collective efficacy, internal and external political efficacy, as well as political interactions that occur on platforms like Facebook and Twitter. Along with the increasing use of social media, these platforms have become essential in shaping political participation by serving as spaces for individuals to access information and news, whether sourced from family, friends, or conventional media outlets. Consequently, public participation through social media not only facilitates the exchange of information but also simplifies the process for political actors to engage in cross-

sector interactions, particularly during the stages of socialization and political campaigns (Ambrose et al., 2015).

Challenges in Digital Democracy

The role of social media in the development of democracy is inevitable, because the development of social media is so significant that it has become public consumption until now, but in the attitude of society towards the influence of social media in democracy, namely Skeptical, Pessimistic, and Optimistic. a) Optimists believe that social media has expanded access to communication and interaction as well as social networks in the mobilization and integration of democratic actors easily without ideological, religious or ethnic barriers. b) The pessimistic view that social media is feared to become a tool for trading national identity (religion, culture, ethnicity, etc.). c) Skeptics believe that social media involvement has no major implications for the development of democracy, so that in the electoral space this attitude has no influence at all on the democratic process in the real world.

The emergence of social media such as Facebook, Tik-tok, Instagram, and Twitter can be used as a source by political organizations to educate the public by looking at the correlation between sharing videos on Facebook and the ability of the video to influence participants' views (Amaturo et al., 2023; Grigoryan, 2024; Sandoval-Almazan et al., 2021). This is because the popularity of the image is more related to user information than the content itself. As users in Egypt do, social media gets the most attention, on the grounds that social media is not only Facebook and Twitter, but social media can also be in the form of images or videos, because through videos one can see more clearly the information developing on social media. Due to its significant development, it can be seen that social media has a big influence on organizational performance because it is easily accessible and quickly conveyed to the public.

The role of social media in democracy in Indonesia is interesting because social media has developed significantly so that most elite political actors have changed their campaign style to get the most votes. Seeing the rapid development of digital technology, of course many political actors are motivated by the success of one of the world leaders in winning two presidential contests, so it is certain that the digital social media space is now widely used by politicians or actors. Seeing the large number of users of digital spaces such as social media networks, digital actors really see its potential as a very profitable campaign arena.

Social media and digital networks are contextualized and examined in relation to social movements and activism. A number of communicative practices that socialize activists are identified and how information and communication technologies (ICTs) are embedded in roles and functions relevant to activists and social movements aiming to draw attention to the importance of social ties and online networks. Thus, the results of the study can show a strong and positive relationship between social media use and political engagement among young people in all three countries, and provide additional insights into the role of social media use in the process of young people's political engagement. In particular, our results also provide reasons to be optimistic about the impact of new forms of popular digital media on long-standing patterns of political injustice.

Development of a social media-based system that encourages active citizen participation through the implementation of democratic practices such as voting and election campaigns. The benefits of an e-Democracy system are numerous: This reduces the chances of fraud during the election. Saves time by eliminating some of the improper election processes. This facilitates

communication between citizens and elected candidates, because democracy in Indonesia is still far from adequate because election organizers do not yet understand democracy substantively, not to mention the very expensive election costs and control over people who are no longer running. Because it is not needed because it is only a complement to what should be true democracy in the hands of the people, it only becomes procedural democracy.

The problem faced by the current election lies in political parties, where political parties have not succeeded in presenting themselves as quality political figures, parties have also succeeded in radiating political identity based on popular orientation, showing that political parties that build parties and without political parties there is no functioning democratic system have largely failed because political parties that should be pillars of democracy must be able to reform themselves but on the contrary cannot democratize themselves because they still use a direct government system to the center or DPP so that they only listen to party messages when paid. It is also clear that in this way people do not feel obligated to politicians who give them money or t-shirts, which in turn makes the entire payment model lose its usefulness.

The implementation of e-Government in utilizing social media for democratic purposes has introduced a new strategy known as "passive crowdsourcing," where the government adopts a more observational role in accommodating public aspirations. Through this approach, the government monitors public discussions and conversations occurring within the community, analyzing the various issues and topics being raised by residents in a specific region. The information gathered is then processed to identify existing problems, after which the government formulates appropriate solutions, fostering a collaborative relationship between authorities and citizens. This method is designed to ensure that the community does not act in isolation, as there is still an element of government oversight and support, even if not always conducted directly, but rather through mutual commitment that has been established. Moreover, the influence of social media is not limited to adults; it has also deeply penetrated the lives of youth and children. Many young people today actively participate in political activities through social media platforms, while others utilize these platforms to support organizational initiatives, thereby facilitating more effective political communication and engagement with government processes.

However, the most serious threat to democracy is the influence of money in all political transactions, the most popular of which is money politics. This fact tarnishes the good name of the people's legislative members, including the DPR. As if there were no other alternatives such as national or provincial that could be taken unless the people's representatives received illicit money. The impression that is developing in society is that people's representatives do not represent the people and are not at all self-interested but are no different from thugs at the terminal who want to make personal profits on the shoulders of the people which leads to the destruction of people's support for democracy so that people do not want to participate anymore but it cannot be denied that the birth of this money politics is caused by some people themselves who cannot think long term for the next generation so that people can participate if given directly at that time either in the form of goods or money.

Social Media as a Medium of Democracy

Judging from the developments that have occurred in the democratic process in Indonesia, it is explained that democratic culture is not caused by a lack of technology but democracy as the best indicator to measure the decline in public participation in democracy. This is because

community participation is very much needed to be involved in government supervision, even though the community is only a participant in formulating a policy so that in the context of democracy it becomes an irrelevant and unresponsive part. Because in society as part of a democracy that can control the government both in formulating a policy and in the process of implementing the policy, society is considered incapable. Public capacity and participation in general can help overcome the general challenges of moving democratic mechanisms to the Internet and ignoring the underlying realities of their substance (Fung, 2015; Skelcher & Torfing, 2010).

On the other hand, the role of social media in democracy, which is now a tool for direct community involvement in conveying aspirations to be accommodated by the government as the highest authority holder as material for public policy, is the percentage of young Indonesian activists in utilizing the internet. Because seen from the activities in cyberspace, of course your involvement is easily very influential and cannot be separated from social media because the existence of social media is one form of implementation of digital politics. Digital politics can simply be said to be a space to form political ties in society based on technological content whose character strengthens or influences the level of democracy. Because your voters are currently very easy to become a hot topic of conversation because they have a representation of around 30-40% nationally, even though the political direction has not been determined, they will have a big influence on politics in Indonesia if they can be educated well. Because besides being young, you understand digital social media because you are faced with a current situation that makes it easy for you to become a mover on social media, especially internet media such as Facebook and Instagram, as well as other trending content.

Social media is real evidence of the shift in society from a traditional society that is not familiar with social media and is just ordinary, changing into a modern society with a digital era that continues to develop to this day. How the popularity of social media beats all forms of communication that used to be only communication through voice, then along with the development of digital technology, now this form of communication can be through WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook. Especially for young people or the millennial generation who are currently trending, life without social media is like not living at all and ironically social media can become public consumption that makes people forget themselves. This means that the development of democracy that continues to this day is greatly influenced by the existence of social media, most actors or political elites in gaining votes and increasing popularity, both in introducing political parties, presidential campaigns, and others, cannot be separated from the use of social media, the development of which is so significant and has become public consumption, especially for millennials.

The added value of the e-democracy index is, first, that it provides a basis for assessing online-enhanced democratic processes (something previously lacking) and, second, that it allows for a more detailed perspective on digital processes in democracy, something that is important for both academics and practitioners. The e-democracy index that I propose is a first step and my only knowledge is that this index aims to record and evaluate the possibility of improving the democratic process through digitalization.

The transition of power becomes the second critical point, namely "elections". When elections and democratic institutions become stronger, leading to the transition of power, we can say that society enters a phase of democratic consolidation. "If the party or group that wins the

first election during the transition period is defeated in the next election and hands over power to the winner, and if the winner of the election then hands over power peacefully to the winner of the next election (which is a sign that a democratic political system has been formed). Citizens can choose and replace their leaders and representatives through free and fair elections; and by various socio-political groups, electoral rules have been accepted as indispensable rules for governing groups competing for power.

Citizens can choose and replace their leaders and representatives through free and fair elections; and by various socio-political groups, electoral rules have been accepted as indispensable rules for governing groups competing for power. Similar things were expressed (Vromen et al., 2015). The use of social media is not only among adults, social media has penetrated the lives of young people and children, because many young people are also directly involved in the world of politics, but there are also young people who use social media to get involved in organizations so that their political communication can be achieved in the world of government. meaning that the role and power of social media is only just beginning but social media has the potential to transform Melanesian political processes to encourage greater engagement with Government, develop new forms of greater transparency, democracy and accountability and to usher in an era of political change. So along with the development of social media technology in Indonesia, it cannot be denied that in the very near future the system that will be used in Indonesia is an e-democracy system like that used in developed countries, so this research tries to make a special contribution.

Conclusion

Based on the analysis of all the above literature, it can be concluded that social media in the digital era can influence all aspects of life. No exception in political life in Indonesia. Social media is not only an icon in the democratic process in Indonesia but as a product that can provide a new innovation for the development of the political world because it can be used as a forum for stakeholders to boost electability by involving the wider community as an object of the political elite's interests gain votes, even social media can be used as a means of communication between friends, relatives and society in general but the development of social media with a number of platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Waths App, Youtube and various other online media becomes tools and facilities that are inclusive of the government in the aspect of e-governance as well as being a sufficient solution for enriching the repertoire of political actors to carry out political campaigns.

The massive use of social media by the community increasingly adds to the acceleration of political stakeholders in measuring the level of electability and popularity in the life of democracy, especially ahead of regional elections in all provinces, regencies and cities in Indonesia. With the state of development of social media that can be said to be fairly fast, we cannot imagine how the contestation and the future of democracy in Indonesia will change means and methods of politics. By looking at the facts explained above, a democratic system that will be used in Indonesia is a digital system or e-democracy with the involvement of millennials who have an important role to become the engine and promoter in a new style of Indonesian democracy.

Democracy in Indonesia will further maximize digital power as the most effective means of democracy. With the fact that the digital world can solve the problem of disputes between the

authorities and the people, because we can see the digital world more open to democracy which is not only a vote and campaign but also a means of political education and political empowerment.

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