POLITICAL EDUCATION AND SOCIAL MEDIA

[1]Misrina, [2] Nur Aslamiyanti Safi, [3]Rafika Ikbal, [4]Suparjo Hi. Sahil

Universitas Khairun

Abstract: Political education through social media is a concept that emphasizes the importance of understanding and practicing democratic values, public participation, and comprehension of political processes through digital platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Through social media, individuals can quickly and broadly access political information, but they are also at risk of exposure to invalid or biased content. Therefore, effective political education in the digital era requires critical skills to analyze information, distinguish facts from opinions, and participate in healthy and informed discussions online. In our research, we employed the interview method, involving 87 students, to explore the relationship between political education and social media. The findings indicate that many students actively use social media as it allows them to stay informed about current political developments.

INTRODUCTION

Political communication on social networking social media (particularly Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, etc.) is facilitated by the interconnectedness of visual, textual, and verbal images (Tosepu, 2018). Political communication is a way of delivering messages with political characteristics aimed at influencing the public. The presence of social media is undoubtedly utilized as a communication medium by governments, political parties, activists, and professionals. Social media plays a significant role for political parties in providing information to the public about their political activities. Political parties leverage social media for political purposes because it has the power to influence diverse audiences (Alam, 2019).

As the number of social media users in Indonesia continues to grow, its use has also expanded, particularly in the realm of politics. In Indonesia's political communication process, new media is becoming the medium of the future due to its affordability, quick access, and ease of enabling direct interactions with communicators (Wahid, 2016).

Social media has the power to influence public opinion. Mobilizing support through social media has become faster in delivering messages. Thus, social media has introduced a new chapter in democratic spaces from the perspective of political communication. Consequently, as a communication medium, social media encourages users to actively

participate by contributing and providing open feedback, whether by sharing information or responding online promptly (Budiyono, 2017).

As an alternative medium supported by the strength of communication technology, social media offers numerous benefits in enhancing the understanding of communication democratization, fostering a fair and prosperous information society (Susanto, 2017).

For political parties, utilizing social media enables them to build political communication with political groups, organizations, and supporters. According to Matthew A. Baum and Tim Groeling, social media users have the potential to become new opinion leaders who will attract their own followers (Hastuti, 2011). Therefore, political parties require social media to ensure that their members in legislative positions can provide information to the public honestly and transparently.

The urgency of this research lies in the significance of political education and social media for students. Those who understand how media works will be more critical in filtering information, comprehending the context of news, and avoiding manipulation within misleading narratives.

Political Education

As one of the means to provide political understanding to the public, with the goal of increasing political awareness and participation in political life, political education cannot be underestimated. Kartono (in Hartono, 2016, p. 10) states that:

Political education is also referred to as political forming or Bildung. It is called "forming" because it has the intention to shape political individuals who are aware of their political status/position in society. It is called "Bildung" (formation or self-education) because the term involves the activity of forming oneself, with full awareness and responsibility to become a political person.

In general, political education can be said to be the process of shaping individuals who can understand and realize their political status/position in society. This shows that political education plays a vital role in shaping the mindset and political responsibility of citizens. Additionally, political education is an important aspect in efforts to reform political life, as Pasaribu (2017, p. 56) states that political education is "an effort made by the public to achieve political reform in their daily lives, aiming to create a prosperous society that is accepted both formally and informally." The importance of political education is an absolute necessity in a country, as Sukarna (in Pasaribu, 2017, p. 56) says:

Political education (political education) is a condition quo non (an absolute requirement) because political education fosters awareness of nationhood and citizenship. Political parties in a country that is not yet independent place great importance on this political education so that party members have high cadres to realize an independent nation. In an independent country, political education must continue to be implemented to prevent the loss of national independence or the return of colonization in a more subtle form.

The Role of Social Media in Political Communication

Returning to social media, it is used as a medium of communication where, in today's democratic era, the use of social media has expanded from mere daily conversations to political communication. Both the public and politicians use social media for different political purposes. While the public uses social media to discuss political issues, engage with civil society organizations, and political leaders, most politicians use it as a campaign tool to maintain their public image and as a communication medium to stay engaged with journalists and their potential audience (Howard, Savage, Saviaga, Toxtli, & Monroy-Hernández, 2016). Therefore, it is not surprising that social media channels are now filled with political discussions in addition to everyday conversations.

Considering the power of social media platforms to spread important information to a wider audience, and reflecting on the success of the business industry in marketing their products to a broader customer base efficiently and effectively, politicians today tend to embrace social media communication as part of their strategy to communicate with potential audiences (Nulty, Theocharis, Popa, Parnet, & Benoit, 2016). Social media has now become the primary platform for political campaigns to gain support from potential voters, raise funds for political parties, and achieve other political goals.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative research method. The research location is on campus, and data collection is conducted through observation and interviews. The focus of this research is to explore the aspirations of students to identify the issues being studied, to ensure the validity of the informants in the research, a total of 87 individuals from the University of Khairun campus were selected. The research period is from February to June. Among the study programs involved are PGSD (Elementary School Teacher Education), Indonesian Language, PPKn (Civics Education), English Language, Mathematics, Economics, Fisheries, PGPAUD (Early

Childhood Education), Biology, and Agriculture. To test the validity of the research data, the triangulation technique is used, which includes observation and interviews.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondents in this study were 87 students from various study programs at the University of Khairun. The respondents consisted of students from the PGSD (Elementary School Teacher Education), Indonesian Language, PPKn (Civics Education), English Language, Mathematics, Economics, Fisheries, PGPAUD (Early Childhood Education), Biology, and Agriculture programs. Data collection was carried out through observation and interviews during the period from February to June.

The results of the study indicate that the level of political understanding among students varies. Students who actively use social media to follow political news tend to have a better understanding of politics. They are also more critical in responding to information received through social media.

Social media plays a significant role in political education for students. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube are used by students to obtain political information, discuss political issues, and participate in political activities. Students feel that social media provides quick and easy access to relevant and up-to-date information about politics.

The use of social media also impacts the level of political participation among students. Those who are active on social media tend to be more frequently involved in online political discussions, participate in political campaigns, and follow political developments more intensively. Social media facilitates students in expressing their opinions, gathering support, and mobilizing political action.

The majority of students believe that social media can increase political transparency. They feel that politicians who are active on social media are more accessible and can be monitored by the public. Students also believe that social media enables more direct communication between politicians and constituents, which in turn can improve political accountability.

Political Education Understanding Among Students

Political education is crucial among students, especially given the current apathy towards politics and the low interest in student organizations and their awareness of the issues

they face today. Moreover, it is common to find a system within campuses that tries to distance students from political education processes, such as keeping students away from organizations, society, and other social aspects.

Through political education, we will realize how important politics is in national development. We must remember that politics is inherent in everyone. No one can escape from it. As long as they are human beings (living creatures), politics is essential. We should not reject politics.

Social Media as a Political Education Tool

This study shows that social media plays an important role in political education among students. This finding aligns with Budiyono's (2017) statement that social media allows active participation from users in sharing information and responding online quickly. Social media as a political communication tool enables students to better understand the context of news and avoid manipulative narratives.

Use of Social Media Among Students

As students who use social media such as Facebook, TikTok, and Instagram to quickly access the latest information on political issues, social media is an excellent platform for discussions and debates. Students can also interact by sharing views and opinions, which helps them develop a more comprehensive understanding of political issues. Participating in online discussions can also enhance critical thinking and analytical skills.

For students, using social media to track information about political education can be highly beneficial. Social media is often a place where various political viewpoints, current news, and political discussions occur. However, it is important to approach the information found on social media with a critical and cautious mindset, as social media is also prone to the spread of inaccurate information.

The Power of Social Media in Influencing Public Opinion

Social media has a great power to influence public opinion, including among students. With its wide reach and ability to instantly disseminate information, social media has become an effective tool for shaping public perceptions and views. Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram allow users to interact, discuss, and share information about current issues. This

makes social media an essential tool for students to obtain news and information, as well as to shape their opinions on various topics, ranging from government policies to social issues.

This finding supports Alam's (2019) research, which emphasizes that political parties use social media to influence various audiences. Political parties utilize social media to deliver their messages, mobilize supporters, and influence potential voters. In the context of students, social media allows political parties to reach the young voter segment, which is often harder to access through traditional media. With the right communication strategies, political parties can build narratives that are attractive and relevant to students, thus increasing support and political participation among this group.

Social media as a political communication platform enables the rapid and wide dissemination of information, which can increase political awareness and participation among students. Students who are exposed to political information through social media tend to be more aware and concerned about political issues. They are also more likely to engage in political discussions, participate in campaign activities, and cast their votes in elections. Additionally, social media allows students to access a variety of information sources, enabling them to form more critical and balanced opinions. Thus, social media not only influences public opinion but also plays a crucial role in building more active and informed political participation among students.

Transparency and Accountability Through Social Media

Students feel that social media enhances political transparency and accountability. Through these platforms, politicians and governments can communicate information and policies directly to the public, bypassing traditional media intermediaries. This allows the public, including students, to receive faster and more accurate information about various political issues and public policies. Moreover, social media also enables two-way dialogue between politicians and the public, allowing people to give feedback and ask questions directly, which increases the sense of engagement and public oversight of politicians' actions and policies.

This aligns with Hastuti's (2011) view that social media users have the potential to become opinion leaders with their own followers. Students who are active on social media can play the role of opinion leaders, sharing information and views with their friends and followers. In the political context, these opinion leaders can influence the political perceptions and attitudes of those around them. Thus, social media not only serves as a tool for politicians to

convey information but also as a platform for the public to build broader and more diverse networks of information and discussion.

Through social media, politicians can provide honest and transparent information to the public, which can increase trust and political participation. When politicians use social media to explain their policies, acknowledge mistakes, and respond to public questions, they demonstrate a commitment to transparency and accountability. This can strengthen the relationship between politicians and voters, as well as improve public trust in the political process. Additionally, the transparency provided by social media also allows the public to be more actively involved in political oversight, which in turn can encourage politicians to act more responsibly and be more responsive to the needs and aspirations of the public. Therefore, social media plays an important role in building a more transparent and accountable political culture.

The Importance of Political Education in the Digital Age

This study reaffirms the importance of political education in the digital age. Amidst the surge of information circulating on social media, political education becomes crucial in helping students critically understand and filter news. Without adequate political education, students can easily be swayed by inaccurate information or fake news, which can cloud their views on political and social issues. Proper political education will equip students with analytical skills to evaluate information sources and understand the context behind the news they consume.

Students who understand how media works will be more critical in filtering information and understanding the context of news, as stated by Susanto (2017). Knowledge about media mechanisms, including the dissemination of information and social media algorithms, enables students to become more intelligent and skeptical information consumers. They can recognize bias, propaganda, and manipulated information, as well as distinguish between facts and opinions. Therefore, political education not only develops students' critical thinking abilities but also strengthens their resistance to misleading information.

Political education through social media can help students develop political awareness and civic responsibility, as well as contribute to political renewal, as stated by Pasaribu (2017). Social media as a platform for political education offers students the opportunity to engage in political discussions, follow developments on current issues, and voice their opinions. This active participation not only increases political awareness but also encourages students to take an active role in the democratic process, whether through participation in elections, social

campaigns, or advocacy activities. Thus, political education in the digital age is not only important for forming critical and knowledgeable individuals but also for strengthening democracy and creating a more responsible and participatory society.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusions

Political education and social media have a complex and significant relationship in the modern context. Social media provides fast and wide access to political information, which can enhance political awareness among students. The younger generation, who tends to be active on these platforms, can more easily follow the developments of current political issues. However, behind the speed and convenience of access, social media is also vulnerable to the spread of false information or hoaxes, which can influence the public's understanding of political issues. Therefore, it is important for students to have adequate political education to be more critical in filtering information obtained from social media.

This study shows that social media plays an important role in political education among students. Through social media, politicians and institutions can convey information directly and transparently to the public, which increases political accountability. In addition, social media also facilitates two-way dialogue between politicians and the public, allowing students to actively engage in political discussions. This interaction not only enhances political understanding but also strengthens students' sense of involvement and social responsibility.

Social media facilitates quick and easy access to political information, which can encourage political participation among students. These platforms allow students to engage in various forms of political participation, such as online discussions, digital campaigns, and advocacy for specific issues. Active participation is crucial in building political awareness and encouraging students to take an active role in the democratic process. Furthermore, effective political education can help students develop critical thinking skills, so they can objectively evaluate information and make better decisions as citizens.

Political education in the digital age is important for shaping students who are critical, politically aware, and responsible citizens. The findings support the existing literature on the role of social media in communication and political education, emphasizing the importance of political understanding among the younger generation for better political renewal. Thus, integrating good political education and wisely utilizing social media can be the key to creating

a more informed, critical, and participatory society. This will not only strengthen democracy but also ensure that the younger generation is prepared to face future political challenges.

Recomendation

With the socialization of political education and social media among students, we can encourage digital and media literacy within their curriculum. One important step is to integrate lessons on how to verify information, identify hoaxes, and evaluate the credibility of online information sources. By understanding methods and tools that can be used to check the truth of information, students will be better prepared to handle the flood of information coming through social media. These lessons can include the use of various fact-checking tools, content analysis, and an understanding of how social media algorithms work and how they can influence the types of information users see.

Additionally, it is important to develop students' critical and analytical skills through discussions and practical exercises focused on real-world case studies. For example, students can be invited to evaluate ongoing political campaigns on social media, compare different news sources, and identify potential biases in news reports. In this way, they will not only learn about the theory of digital literacy but also apply it in relevant and real contexts. Teaching digital and media literacy as part of the curriculum will not only help students become more critical and wise information consumers but also prepare them to participate actively and responsibly in political and social life.

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