DIGITAL POLITICAL COMMUNICATION IN INDONESIA

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Abstract

The habit of Indonesian society in seeking information has undergone a shift. Previously, television and print media were considered as the primary means to access up-to-date information, but it has now changed towards a greater tendency to rely on digital media as the main source of information. This transformation is in line with the demands of the fourth industrial revolution, which requires society to be more digitally connected. The significant attention of the Indonesian people towards the internet has provided an opportunity for political actors to shift their focus toward using digital media as a tool for political communication. Through research using a descriptive literature study method, the researchers attempt to observe political communication related to current political actors in Indonesia through online news, academic journals, television news, and digital literacy. The study found that political communication built through digital media is more effective because political messages can be conveyed more easily due to Indonesian society's substantial attention to the internet. Additionally, using digital media allows for saving time and costs in delivering political messages. Digital political communication is not only useful for personal branding but can also be employed to resolve conflicts between the government and society.

Keywords — Political Communication, Digital Media, Digital Society.

1. INTRODUCTION

The massive spread of the Covid-19 virus in Indonesia in 2020 had a significant impact on the way of life of Indonesian society. Unlike the spread of Avian Influenza (Bird flu), which required humans to maintain distance from birds, Covid-19 required humans to maintain distance from each other to prevent transmission. Under the pretext of health, the societal lifestyle was forced to undergo a complete upheaval, where in-person interactions had to be replaced with online interactions.

The closure of face-to-face interactions surprisingly opened up vast digital spaces. All aspects of life had to innovate to respond to the challenges of the times. The education sector had to transform its learning models into online patterns, and businesses competed to provide digital service convenience, leading to a surge in online businesses offering various services and trade. This health phenomenon had profound impacts on the social, economic, and political aspects of society.

The rapid flow of the internet, accompanied by its ease and convenience, has changed the communication mode of Indonesian society. In line with the demands of the fourth industrial revolution, which requires society to be digitally advanced, Indonesians have started adapting to these requirements. The characteristics of a digitally advanced society, also known as the digital society, signify an important marker of the ongoing era of the fourth industrial revolution, presenting new challenges in every aspect of life, including political communication.

Internet access seems to be no longer a rare commodity for Indonesian society. According to data presented by APJII, the number of Indonesians connected to the internet in 2021 reached 272,682,600 out of the total population of 210,062,769 (Arif, 2022). Indonesian society, or more commonly known as +62 citizens, including a large portion of social media users, spends an average of 3 hours and 26 minutes on social media within an 8-hour and 36-minute period connected to the internet (Pertiwi, 2018). One can imagine the vast digital space in Indonesia, and this extensive use of social media has become a catalyst for political contestation issues in the country. The significant attention of the Indonesian people towards the digital realm stimulates politicians' instincts to utilize digital platforms to gain support from the public. If not handled wisely, political contestation through digital media can potentially escalate tensions and social conflicts within society. This change in communication methods has also transformed the behavior of Indonesian society in economic, social, cultural, and political activities. In politics, the immense interest of Indonesian society in the Internet provides a breath of fresh air for politicians to build their political communication in the digital sphere. The freedom to share information provided by the digital space becomes a fertile ground for politicians to convey their interests and build a positive image of themselves in the public eye. All political movements required can easily be conveyed through the media available in the digital realm. After more than two years of the overshadowing Covid-19 phenomenon in Indonesian life, the society has started adapting to the lifestyle shaped by this phenomenon. However, Indonesians are reluctant to move on from the digital-centric life that has already provided comfort. Campaigning through the digital space still proves effective in garnering support. Political interactions through the digital realm are shifting Indonesia's democratic journey towards digital democracy or E-democracy. Consensus in the journey of digital democracy is fostered through dialogues enabled by the public space provided by the digital realm. Thanks to internet access, information dissemination is swift and easily accessible to the public, making political communication straightforward to establish. Real-time information is present in the digital space and can be immediately consumed by the public. The digital space becomes a barrier-free arena immune to dominant powers. Every user can freely express their opinions and easily assess the information obtained within the digital realm. The ease and speed offered by digital political communication are seen as a positive impact of using the internet in political communication. However, the presence of memes, hoaxes, cyberbullying, and trolling have negative consequences on political communication within the digital space. The chaos of political gossip triggered by anonymous characters leads to the deterioration of the quality of political communication within the digital realm. The study of digital political communication in Indonesia is intriguing because through understanding digital political communication, we can observe the political process in Indonesia and how information technology is utilized in political communication within the country.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The literature study method is considered appropriate for analyzing and solving the research problem. This research is of a descriptive analysis nature, meaning that the data obtained is described, analyzed, and explained to provide an understanding of the collected data. The secondary data for this research were obtained from the author's observations through information presented on Kompas TV channel with the theme of countering hoaxes in the 2024 elections, aired on October 10, 2022, Twitter accounts @dennysiregar, @aniesbaswedan, and several other accounts, digital media from tribunnews, detik.com, and other digital media, as well as academic journals and several

articles related to digital political communication in Indonesia. The information gathered from these various sources aims to address the research problem by analyzing and explaining the collected data.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Political communication is a process of delivering political messages by political communicators through a medium to the recipients (communicaees) to achieve the political interests of the communicators. These components serve as input to determine the desired output of the political system (Shahreza, 2018).

The most substantial aspect of political communication is the political message itself. It represents the efforts of the communicator to achieve their political goals. The delivery of the desired political message requires a medium, which acts as an intermediary communication channel from the communicator to the recipients. This communication channel creates a public space that eventually becomes a space for political discussions and dialogues, leading to a consensus. The delivery of political messages through digital spaces is considered more effective due to the independence and efficiency offered by the digital realm. Compared to print or television media, utilizing digital media is more efficient and practical, without the need to invite many journalists or conduct special press conferences.

One form of political communication presented in the public space was during the 2019 presidential election, where surprisingly, Joko Widodo announced K.H. Ma'ruf Amin as his running mate for vice president. It was later revealed that Joko Widodo's selection of K.H. Ma'ruf Amin was a form of political communication through personal branding of K.H. Ma'ruf Amin as a prominent figure in Indonesian Muslim society. This method was considered successful and effective in gaining the sympathy of the Indonesian Muslim community, leading to their victory in the 2019 presidential election (Mujab & Irfansyah, 2020).

Another political figure who uses personal branding as a method in their political communication is Ganjar Pranowo. Ganjar actively uses Instagram as a means of political communication to shape the public's perception of himself. The two-way communication built by Ganjar through optimizing Instagram creates a positive image, making his political communication easily established. The distribution of political messages through social media has a significant impact on Ganjar Pranowo's personal branding efforts, creating a sense of closeness between Ganjar and the public (Rahman, 2021). Political communication through personal branding would require significant time and cost if done conventionally, but through the internet, all these can be minimized. Besides being cost-effective and time-efficient, the intended target of the political message can be reached more accurately. For example, without the help of the internet, political actors would have to campaign with a substantial budget to shape public opinion about themselves. However, with internet assistance, all of this becomes easy and affordable by simply creating content and sharing it with followers.

In its development, the use of information technology has shifted the public space from conventional to digital. The use of the internet has created a new public space, mainly through the emergence of social media and the internet, which is accessible to anyone for the benefit of the capital owners (Lim, 2012). In Indonesia, the digital space began to take shape after the fall of the Soeharto regime in 1998. As internet presence started to grow, middle-class society in Indonesia was previously unable to voice their ideas and opinions through mainstream media. The opening of internet access provided a free digital space for civil society to express their opinions about the government. The

rapid pace of internet access at that time was believed to reduce the government's control over information, thus opening up a space for political discussions not feasible in traditional media (Zainal & Megasari, 2019).

The trend of using digital media for delivering political messages has given rise to a new term known as digital democracy. In a journal by Witawan, Mudana, Sitompul, Nur, and Purnawibawa (Witawan & Mudana, 2022), six perspectives of digital democracy based on the use of digital media for political communication are categorized into two dimensions:

Government-centered perspective

First is the perspective of legal democracy. According to this view, the significant issue related to the lack of distributed information by the state can be resolved with the help of digital media. With the aid of information and communication technology, the government will function more effectively. Second is competitive democracy. In this perspective, there is competition between parties and leaders to gain voter support. Digital media is utilized for information dissemination and campaigning.

The Citizen-Centered Perspective

The second is plebiscitary democracy. This perspective emphasizes the use of digital media as a network to conduct polls and electronic referendums to create a digital discussion space. The fourth is pluralist democracy. This perspective uses digital media as a means of political debate, emphasizing free and open discourse. The fifth is participatory democracy. This perspective uses digital media as a means of political promotion, making it an important instrument for disseminating positive roles that can be accessed freely. The sixth is libertarian democracy. In this perspective, the focus is on citizens' autonomous politics through horizontal communication.

The General Election Commission as the organizer of elections in Indonesia also uses the internet media as a means to convey information to voters. The political attitudes of the Indonesian society are also shaped by critical information presented by social media. Social media creates a network that brings forth issues and various ideas as references for the Indonesian society. Through the opportunities opened up by social media, it serves as a means to convey the necessary information to voters.

Over the past two decades, social media has proven to be effective as a means of information dissemination. User-generated content on social media is a form of interactive communication between users. Information dissemination through social media can be distributed more cheaply and quickly. Therefore, it is not surprising that social media is chosen as a means of political communication by political actors in Indonesia.

One of the political figures who use social media as a means to build their political communication is Ganjar Pranowo. Ganjar actively uses Instagram as a tool for political communication to shape public perception of himself. Through two-way communication, Ganjar optimizes Instagram to build his image, making his political communication easier. The distribution of political messages through social media has a significant impact on Ganjar Pranowo's efforts in personal branding and his closeness to the public.

The emergence of the internet as a digital space has shifted the dynamics of Indonesian politics from conventional to digital. Internet media provides a space for free access, making it accessible to various segments of society. The internet is a platform where information is quickly and easily accessible to the public.

In this digital space, there is an element of anonymity that affects the responsibility of disseminating political information. Disinformation has been a side effect of the freedom of expression in the digital space.

Currently, society's habits of seeking information have changed. The internet has

become the primary means for people to access information. Political actors in Indonesia and around the world utilize the vast reach of the digital world for their political interests. The information presented by political actors is seen as effective in influencing public opinion to achieve their political goals.

Digital space has become a characteristic of digital democracy. However, this freedom also unknowingly limits society's field of view. Big data obtained from digital footprints can be used to create algorithms, controlling the information presented to internet users. This information manipulation can influence public opinion

The Indonesian government has taken several steps to combat disinformation and hoaxes in the digital space. They have implemented three mechanisms to detect hoaxes: the Automatic Identification System (AIS), the cyber patrol team, and citizen reporting. These efforts aim to minimize the spread of disinformation and hoaxes and maintain a conducive digital environment in Indonesia.

4. KESIMPULAN

In the dynamics of politics, political communication is essential to convey political messages from political actors to the public in order to achieve their political goals. In delivering political messages, a medium is needed to distribute them effectively and efficiently. In the era of the fourth industrial revolution, which has shaped a digital society, a new mass media has emerged through digital public space.

In Indonesia, the utilization of digital space as a means of conveying political messages in political communication activities has been carried out by several political figures. The use of the internet as a tool for political communication is considered more effective because digital media offers easy access and rapid dissemination of information without requiring significant budgets. As a result, digital political communication has attracted the attention of political actors in building their political communication. Digital political communication can be carried out not only through verbal communication but also through sharing photos to build the identity of political actors without the need for detailed explanations and large budget campaigns.

In addition to personal branding, political communication through digital means can also provide solutions to conflicts that occur within society. As demonstrated by Ganjar Pranowo in responding to conflicts between authorities and the community opposing the extraction of andesite stones in Wadas Village.

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