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Assessing the Impact of Social Media Utilization on Civic Political Competence: A Case Study of Residents in Environment VI, Sidorejo Urban Village, Medan Tembung District

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ABSTRACT

Social media has emerged as a pivotal medium for the dissemination of political information and the facilitation of public engagement in addressing socio-political issues and public policies. The extent of this engagement is largely contingent upon the public's capacity to critically evaluate and interpret information. This study investigates the relationship between social media usage and the political participatory competence of residents in Environment VI, Sidorejo Village, Medan Tembung District. Utilizing a quantitative, correlational research design, data were gathered through observation, structured questionnaires, and documentary analysis, and subsequently examined using descriptive statistical methods. Based on responses from 30 participants, the findings reveal a significant positive correlation between active engagement with social media and heightened political participatory competence. These results substantiate the

hypothesis that social media use enhances civic political capacity, underscoring its instrumental role in promoting informed political participation.

Keyword: *Participatory Competence, Community, Social Media, Politics*

ABSTRAK

Media sosial kini berperan penting dalam menyebarkan informasi politik dan mendorong keterlibatan masyarakat dalam menanggapi isu serta kebijakan publik. Keterlibatan ini sangat bergantung pada kemampuan masyarakat untuk menganalisis dan menilai informasi secara kritis. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui pengaruh penggunaan media sosial terhadap kecakapan partisipatoris politik masyarakat di Lingkungan VI, Kelurahan Sidorejo, Kecamatan Medan Tembung. Metode yang digunakan adalah penelitian korelasional dengan pendekatan kuantitatif. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, pengisian kuesioner, dan studi dokumentasi, serta dianalisis dengan statistik deskriptif. Hasil penelitian yang melibatkan 30 responden menunjukkan bahwa penggunaan media sosial secara aktif memiliki pengaruh positif yang signifikan terhadap kecakapan partisipatoris politik masyarakat. Temuan ini membuktikan bahwa hipotesis yang diajukan, yaitu adanya pengaruh penggunaan media sosial terhadap kecakapan partisipatoris politik, terbukti benar, dan menunjukkan pentingnya media sosial dalam meningkatkan keterlibatan politik masyarakat.

Kata kunci: *Kecakapan Partisipatoris, Masyarakat, Media Sosial, Politik*

INTRODUCTION

The limited political knowledge, character and ideological orientation, critical thinking skills, and participatory capacity among the public—rooted in the weakness of political education—have created fertile ground for political mobilization orchestrated by dominant regimes. This has led to the erosion of political ethics. The political climate has become increasingly ambiguous, a consequence of cadre recruitment processes characterized by weak mechanisms and standards. This dysfunction undermines the quality of political party cadre formation and leaves society vulnerable to unethical political practices (Muhlis, 2021:117).

Political parties, ideally functioning as institutions that coordinate candidates to compete in elections, have seen their organizational integrity compromised by members who perpetuate unhealthy political behaviors and thinking. The heightened momentum of the 2024 general elections reflects a concerning trend: political parties promoting celebrity candidates whose popularity eclipses their lack of political knowledge. This practice represents a failure to cultivate rational and principled political engagement, exposing the ongoing inability of political parties to consolidate and develop high-quality leadership (Yulanda, 2023:142).

Social media, now deeply embedded in everyday life, serves as a primary tool for communication and information dissemination (Ainiyah et al., 2018:223). Driven by an innate curiosity, individuals utilize the efficiency of online platforms to bridge distances

and access up-to-date information, including political content. Political discourse on social media has become a high-sensitivity phenomenon, drawing the public to not only consume but also analyze and critique such information. This reflects the broader reality that political discussions inherently involve the distribution of justice across Indonesian society.

Political party cadres have increasingly exploited social media as a vehicle for political communication. Various platforms—Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp, Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), and others—are used not only to disseminate political education content but also as tools for marketing and political campaigning in support of party-backed candidates. The political atmosphere in 2024 has been marked by the strategic use of populism, wherein candidates project themselves as champions of the common people. Social media adeptly records these populist engagements, seeking to garner public sympathy and electoral support. Political campaigning is no longer limited to official cadres; it extends to candidates themselves and even to voluntary online supporters or netizens (Khisbiyah et al., 2018).

Despite the ideal of a rational political culture grounded in critical engagement, many political actors—elites and ordinary citizens alike—fail to embody or uphold this ideal. Political attitudes and orientations remain entangled with dynastic politics, corruption, institutional instability, and intra-party conflicts. The concept of rational politics demands loyalty to constitutional principles rather than to constituent whims. However, a significant portion of the public fails to grasp this distinction, often assuming that candidates engaging in vote-buying tactics are inherently more deserving of electoral success. Social media has, in many cases, become a platform through which political actors manipulate public perception to secure support, often through duplicitous means.

The influence of social media on civic rationality is substantial. Some information disseminated online is independent and well-intentioned, aiming to educate and inform the public (Setiawan, 2019). Conversely, much of it is unethical—driven by personal or group interests and often laden with falsehoods meant solely to boost political image. The classification and interpretation of social media content significantly affect the development of rational political consciousness, depending largely on the public's evaluative perspective.

The superficial political reasoning prevalent in society poses a serious challenge. Many citizens lack the ability to think critically when confronted with political information, choosing instead to accept it at face value without engaging in rational and selective analysis. This contributes to a decline in rational political competence. Consequently, the public becomes easily swayed by populist rhetoric, which undermines the very essence of political education—an intentional and systematic process aimed at cultivating political awareness and a strong national identity, in line with the values of Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution. Rational politics aspires to foster a society guided by reason rather than one manipulated by oligarchic interests (Faulks, 2019).

The significant influence of social media on political behavior has been empirically demonstrated. A study by Dimaz et al. (2022), titled *“Social Media and Its Influence on the Political Participation of First-Time Voters in Regional Elections,”* employed a quantitative method and found that social media use explained 31% of the variance in first-time voter participation (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.306$). The study, conducted in

Tanjung Jabung Timur Regency, confirmed a strong correlation between social media use and voter engagement (Andriyendi et al., 2023:106).

Nevertheless, a critical gap in the existing literature is evident: previous studies have predominantly focused on the direct impact of social media on first-time voter participation. The present study addresses this limitation by shifting the focus toward examining the influence of social media on the rational political competence of the broader public. Unlike earlier studies that confined their scope to specific demographic groups, this research encompasses all residents of Environment VI, Sidorejo Subdistrict, Medan Tembung District—regardless of age or legal voting status. The underlying principle is that high or low voter participation, in the absence of rational political engagement, renders the realization of a healthy democracy ineffective.

The informational dynamics surrounding political life on social media present a complex challenge. While some content is valid and contributes to political education, much is invalid, misleading, and constructed purely for image-building. The dual nature of such content—both constructive and destructive—places a heavy burden on the public's ability to critically assess it. These assessments are ultimately reflected in electoral decisions, such as selecting candidates, tolerating vote-buying practices, and even supporting dynastic politics and oligarchic control.

This worrisome trajectory may lead to the erosion of rational political competence among citizens, threatening the integrity of Indonesian democracy. If left unchecked, the democratic process could become dominated by political actors who disregard ethical norms and social justice—values essential to the Indonesian national identity (Astuti et al., 2022:152).

This study, titled “The Influence of Social Media Use on the Psychomotor Dimension of Political Competence Among Citizens of Sidorejo Subdistrict, Medan Tembung District,” aims to empirically investigate the extent to which social media functions as an informational and communicative tool that shapes rational political engagement. Rational political thinking must be cultivated and internalized by all citizens. Only then can political information be analyzed selectively and critically, ultimately producing a politically conscious electorate capable of constructive criticism and rational voting behavior. A society grounded in rational political competence will not tolerate political deceit, thus preserving the ethical foundation of Indonesia's democratic system.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The intersection of political education, media use, and civic competence has become a growing area of concern in the study of democratic participation. A persistent limitation in political knowledge, ideological clarity, critical thinking, and participatory capacity among the public has been identified as a structural weakness rooted in insufficient political education (Muhlis, 2021). This educational deficit has enabled dominant political regimes to exploit public ignorance for political mobilization, contributing to a deterioration of ethical standards in political engagement. Furthermore, the absence of rigorous cadre recruitment mechanisms has compromised the integrity of

political parties, resulting in weak leadership pipelines and a public increasingly vulnerable to manipulative political practices.

Political parties, envisioned as institutions to channel political competition, have been undermined by internal dysfunction. As Yulanda (2023) observes, the growing tendency of political parties to endorse celebrity figures based solely on popularity rather than competence reveals a failure in fostering rational, informed political discourse. This trend reflects a broader institutional shortcoming in the consolidation of democratic values and leadership development.

Social media, meanwhile, has emerged as a dominant vehicle for political communication and public discourse. Its ubiquity has reshaped how individuals access and engage with political information (Ainiyah et al., 2018). Platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp, Facebook, and X (formerly Twitter) are widely used to disseminate political messages, foster dialogue, and conduct both formal and informal campaigning. The dual capacity of social media—as a space for critical engagement and as a tool for political manipulation—underscores its central role in shaping contemporary political behavior (Khisbiyah et al., 2018).

On one hand, social media allows for participatory political learning, enabling individuals to seek, critique, and share information, often in real time. On the other, it presents significant challenges: misinformation, populist rhetoric, and superficial content frequently distort public understanding and encourage reactive rather than reflective political behaviors. Setiawan (2019) highlights the tension between well-intentioned, educational content and information aimed at promoting partisan agendas or personal image-building, warning that the interpretative lens of the public is critical in shaping outcomes.

Compounding this issue is the widespread lack of critical political reasoning among citizens, which hampers their ability to assess the validity of political content online. Many individuals, when confronted with political narratives, are prone to accepting them at face value without deeper analysis. This vulnerability diminishes rational political competence and opens the door for manipulative populism to flourish. As Faulks (2019) argues, genuine political education requires cultivating a citizenry capable of reasoned judgment, rooted in constitutional principles rather than populist promises or oligarchic control.

Empirical research supports these concerns. Dimaz et al. (2022) found a significant correlation between social media use and political participation among first-time voters in regional elections, with social media accounting for 31% of the variance in participatory behavior (Andriyendi et al., 2023). However, these studies have predominantly focused on specific demographic groups, such as novice voters, thereby overlooking broader public dynamics in rational political competence.

This current study addresses that gap by examining how social media influences not merely political participation, but the deeper, psychomotor dimension of political competence—namely, the ability to interact, monitor public issues, and influence policy among residents of Sidorejo Subdistrict, Medan Tembung District. Unlike prior research limited to voter turnout or intention, this study engages with the quality of political engagement and the internalization of rational political thinking across a more diverse population.

The informational dynamics of social media present both opportunity and peril. Valid content can strengthen political literacy, while invalid or provocative material erodes public trust and misdirects civic energy. Astuti et al. (2022) caution that unless political competence is grounded in rationality and ethical reasoning, democracy may be subverted by elite manipulation, populist spectacles, and vote-buying behavior—all of which are increasingly normalized through uncritical media consumption.

In sum, the reviewed literature emphasizes the critical role of political education and rational engagement in maintaining democratic integrity. The influence of social media—while significant—must be evaluated not just in terms of reach and usage, but in terms of its contribution to or detriment from reasoned political behavior. This study seeks to advance that understanding by exploring how social media functions as a double-edged instrument in shaping political competence within the local sociopolitical context of Indonesian urban society.

METHOD

The research employed a quantitative method with a correlational approach, aimed at examining the relationship between two variables: social media usage as the independent variable and political participatory competence as the dependent variable. This study adopts existing theoretical frameworks while simultaneously attempting to construct a new theoretical perspective on the linkage between social media and political participation. As a correlational study, it investigates the association between variables without manipulating them.

The research was conducted in Environment VI, Sidorejo Subdistrict, selected due to its residents' active engagement with social media. Accordingly, the study is expected to offer novel insights into the impact of social media on political participation within the community. The population of the study comprised all residents of Sidorejo Subdistrict, while the sample was selected using purposive sampling, based on specific characteristics deemed representative of the broader population. The independent variable in this study is social media usage, whereas the dependent variable, political participatory competence, is measured through three indicators: interaction skills, monitoring of public issues, and influence on public policy.

The research utilized quantitative data, including primary data obtained through observations and questionnaires, and secondary data gathered from literature sources. Data collection methods included observation, questionnaire administration, and document analysis. The research instruments were tested for validity and reliability, with the results confirming their adequacy, as evidenced by a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.745.

Once the data were collected, they were analyzed using descriptive statistical analysis to provide a general overview of the research object without drawing generalized conclusions. This study is expected to contribute significantly to the understanding of the relationship between social media usage and political participatory competence within the context of the local community.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Findings and Discussion

The results of this study, analyzed using statistical data processing with the assistance of IBM SPSS version 29, focused on a dataset comprising responses to 4 out of 9 questionnaire items categorized under the highest rating scale. The mean scores were calculated based on this data to determine the extent of influence that social media usage has on political participatory competence, which was measured through three key indicators: interaction skills, the ability to monitor public issues, and influence over public policy. The results reveal a positive and significant relationship between social media use and political participatory competence.

Data gathered from 30 respondents residing in Environment VI, Sidorejo Subdistrict, Medan Tembung District, indicate that respondents who were active users of social media displayed superior interaction skills. Approximately 81% of respondents agreed that social media platforms provided a more comfortable space for engaging in political discussions and communication.

Additionally, 79% of participants reported an improvement in the community's ability to monitor public issues, facilitated by the rapid and broad access to diverse sources of political information available on social media. As for the ability to influence public policy, 75% of respondents stated that social media has enabled the public to engage in issue advocacy through online campaigns and petitions. Despite challenges such as the risk of misinformation, these findings underscore the critical role of social media in enhancing political participatory competence, particularly in fostering public engagement and awareness of political issues.

Observational data collected prior to administering the structured questionnaire also reinforced these findings. The researcher observed that respondents were visibly active in using social media as a medium for expressing opinions and discussing political matters. Many residents of Environment VI in Sidorejo Subdistrict used these platforms to articulate personal viewpoints and participate in public debates. The majority relied on social media as their primary source of political information, accessing news and policy analyses through various accounts and pages they followed. Respondents showed a high level of engagement by frequently posting, sharing, and commenting on political content.

These activities reflect a strong civic commitment to active political engagement. Respondents also demonstrated an adequate level of political knowledge, being able to identify and explain current political phenomena—an indication that social media had contributed to their understanding of the political landscape. These preliminary observations provided a foundational perspective before administering the questionnaire to obtain more structured data.

Discussion

1. Social Media and Political Interaction Skills

Social media has a significant impact on individual interaction skills within political contexts, encompassing attentive listening, effective questioning, expressing thoughts and emotions, and conflict management. Firstly, the skill of attentive listening is enhanced through interactions on social media platforms, where users are exposed to

a diversity of perspectives, thus fostering empathy and deeper understanding (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955). Secondly, the ability to ask effective questions becomes increasingly relevant on such platforms due to their dynamic and open nature, encouraging users to raise thought-provoking and relevant questions that foster richer discussions (Dahlgren, 2009).

Furthermore, the ability to express ideas and emotions is strengthened as individuals can instantly communicate their opinions and receive feedback, enriching their political involvement (Papacharissi, 2010). Lastly, conflict management becomes both more complex and more constructive in digital environments, where open dialogue and transparency enable mediation and consensus-building despite the risk of polarization (Boulianne, 2015). Thus, social media serves not only to refine interactive competencies in political discourse but also provides a space for more productive dialogue.

2. Social Media and Public Issue Monitoring Skills

Social media also significantly influences individuals' skills in monitoring public issues. Firstly, it facilitates access to literature and real-time field data, allowing users to gather information and analyses from scholarly articles, official reports, and civil society commentary—enriching public understanding of political matters (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). Secondly, these platforms promote attendance at public meetings by broadcasting event announcements and discussions, making it easier for users to participate in forums and community gatherings that offer direct political insights (Hoffman, 2017).

Moreover, social media enhances the public's capacity to observe judicial processes and legal system mechanisms, with users able to follow court proceedings and legal developments through official accounts or NGOs that report transparently—thereby deepening civic awareness of legal rights and responsibilities (McCarthy, 2014). As such, social media serves as a powerful tool for monitoring public issues, broadening access to information, and increasing public involvement in political processes.

CONCLUSION

The findings of the study, which involved 30 respondents, indicate that active use of social media has a significant positive impact, confirming the alternative hypothesis regarding the relationship between the two variables under investigation—namely, the effect of social media use (X) on the political participatory competence of the community (Y). A total of 81% of respondents indicated that social media fosters a sense of comfort in communicating and discussing political issues, thereby contributing to the enhancement of interaction skills. Furthermore, 79% reported that the rapid and extensive access to diverse sources of information via social media has improved the public's ability to monitor public issues. Finally, 75% of respondents believed that social media enables citizens to exert greater influence in advocating for specific issues through online campaigns and petitions. Overall, this study affirms that social media functions not only as a tool for communication but also as an effective platform for strengthening political participation and facilitating community engagement in the policymaking process.

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