

7. Freedom of Expression through Social Media and the Political Participation of Young Voters: A Case Study of Elections in Jakarta, Indonesia

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Abstract:

Freedom of expression in social media with ease to express an opinion, comment, be a friend, a follower of the candidate, as well as easy to share links and to post 'like', encouraging young voters to participate in the election and influencing their decision to vote. Young people are often considered as a group that does not matter even tend apathetic towards politics because they think their voices will not be heard by the authorities. However, advances in technology have removed this presumption by breaking down barriers to freedom of expression. The survey conducted on 385 university students in Jakarta and the Jakarta gubernatorial elections in 2012 and 2017 to a research context. Freedom to obtain information that is not limited and interaction in social media also encourage young voters to participate in elections.

Keywords:

Social media; freedom of expression; elections; young voters; media effects

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Since its presence in 1997, social media have become coordinating tools for nearly all of the world's political movements. Facebook and other social networking site have been used to mobilize individuals to participate in protests around the globe such as the impeachment trial of Philippine President Joseph Estrada on 17 January 2001, and the London youth riots in summer 2011. Furthermore, Iranian protest against the reelection of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in 2009 and most especially a series of anti-government uprisings in North Africa and the Middle East, starting from Tunisia in December 2010 (Carlisle & Patton, 2013). Former Philippine president, Joseph Estrada blamed 'the text messaging generation' for his downfall. "The protest was arranged by forwarded text messages reading. In some cases, the protesters ultimately succeeded, as in Moldova, 2009, the Communist Party lost power when massive protests coordinated by Facebook and Twitter, broke out after an obviously foul election" (Shirky, 2011). Social networking sites, in particular, played a crucial role in the 2011 Egyptian revolution, prompting an activist to say, "We use Facebook to schedule the protest, Twitter to coordinate, and YouTube to tell the world" (Gong, 2011).

In many countries, the internet is a crucial aspect of election campaigns and is growing more important. Advances in technology can enable a restructuring of the political system. Political actors now can use social media to supply the original message that they want to present to citizens. With a unique combination of textual, auditory, and visual components, new technologies show the potential to present political and civic material to citizens. Messages distributed by social media have the potential to reach very large and plural audiences anonymously. The messages conveyed can be utilized to inform convince and influence people. The relevant political message must be submitted to the voters as a weapon attempting to win an election.

Issues related to social media and the election can be observed in the case of the 2012 American Presidential Election. In this presidential election, Obama is more dominate in the use of social media when compared with his rivals, Romney. Obama was more active on twitter, Facebook, and other forms of social media. He has 30.7 million 'friends' (72%) on Facebook while Romney only has 8.8 million friends (28%). On Twitter, there is a similar distinction. Obama has 93.8% (21 million) followers, which are higher than Romney whom follower are only 6.2% (1.3 million). "Moreover, Obama's account is much more active than Romney's, tweeting about once an hour during the business day, while Romney tweets only once or twice a day" (Collins, 2012). David Perlmutter (2008) credited Barack Obama's effective use of social networking to gain a large share of the youth vote and gain a decisive fundraising edge.

Social media as a typical application of web 2.0 has core principles such as “many-to-many in their connectivity, decentralized in terms of control, user-focused, easy for new users to use, and open in terms of their technology standards, which allow users to make new modifications to the sites over time” (Flew, 2007). Consequently, social media allows us to interact actively, collaborate, and participate in self-organizing, fluid communities (Wood, 2009). Social media is media that “content is created and distributed through social interaction” (Haynes & Pitts, 2009). Social media is “the set of web-based broadcast technologies that enable the democratization of content, giving people the ability to emerge from consumers of content to publisher” (Scott & Jacka, 2011). “The media content is the basis of media impact” (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). “Political information in the media that many people look for are on candidates and campaigns” (Baek & Wojcieszak, 2009). “Voters use the media to learn what issues are important” (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987), “candidate traits” (Weaver et al., 1981) and “candidate issue position” (Chaffee & Kanihan, 1997). Social media are “gaining interactive features, which offer consumers new options for selecting information, personalizing content, and participating in a larger conversation” (Straubhaar, LaRose, & Davenport, 2012).

In the context of electoral web sphere, “social media may facilitate engagement in the election process through three interrelated activities: provision of election-related information, the opportunity for discussion and debate, and opportunity for undertaking election-related political action” (Foot & Schneider, 2006, p. 7). This formulation of political engagement, based on a typology developed by Tsagarousianou (1999), suggests, “Obtaining information, engaging in deliberation, and participating in decision-making are the constituent components of (digital) democracy”.

Social media platforms, as emerging political spaces, have paved the way for the re-conceptualization of political engagement, especially among the youth (Lim, 2009). Young people have often categorized as a group apart from conventional politics and this disengagement contributed to the growing sense of apathy even alienation towards politics. A recurring criticism of the youth is an increase and uneven youth involvement in politics due to their position in society and the circle of life (Loader, 2007). The biggest obstacle for young people to get involved in politics is their negative view of the politicians is perceived by many young people that they do not care and no attempt to address the issues that matter to them (Ward, 2007).

Youth participatory character, particularly blogging, social networking and content sharing, has encouraged more people to be involved in political issues and has contributed to changing the mode of protest from streets to cyberspace. Continuously, evolving technologies as well as the changing approach of the public toward civic engagement, a social undercurrent, has redefined social movements and political participation (Costanza-Chock, 2009), especially among the youth, who consider these technological advancements as demotic. If before, young people were more likely to identify with, join organized groups with a set of ideas, and express their concern through unconventional political actions, such demonstration, and boycotts (Wattenberg, 2008). The youth today are more likely to reject dogmatism avoid commitment and express their indignation through rather conventional and convenient political actions, such as conversations, group discussions, and volunteering. However, this is not to say that the youth are becoming less concerned or are willing stake less. In many ways, the social platforms of the internet amplify these alternatives (conventional

political actions) and reinforce and rationalize the view that political participation does not necessarily need to be inconvenient (Lim, 2009). Althaus and Tewksbury (2000) support this statement by saying users have the ability to control their information usage on the internet and young people use the web for surveillance of political information.

“Social media is a phenomenon that could dramatically change how and how many young people participate civically, including voting” (Kahne & Middaugh, 2012, p. 55). Youth see that engage in participatory politics by doing activities such as status updates, tweets, share, post comments, etc. are ways to get involved in politics (Bennett, 1998). The presence of social media makes young people no longer care about the racial and ethnic issues when discussing with others and regularly always strive to stay connected with others in general and his group in particular, through social media (Kahne & Middaugh, 2012). Nonetheless, other studies mention that young people reported that they interacted online only with those whose views aligned with their own (Kahne, Lee, & Feezell, 2011, p. 20).

Social networks help in developing personal trust and cooperation between individuals in the informal social networks and it has the potential to encourage civic and political engagement that can be used to serve the community and democracy in the real world (Carlisle & Patton, 2013). The informal social relationships have played a role in modifying the way individuals choose the promotional content in the media so that are affected the media content. Family members, friends, and others brought ideas from the media to the attention of voters were themselves not exposed directly (Pavlik & McIntosh, 2011). Thus, it can be said that there is a flow of indirect but important for those who have never read or heard the original message because they keep getting the influence of media, from those who are directly affected by the media.

According to Graber (1980), people who are exposed to the mass media already possess a fund of knowledge and attitudes, which they bring to bear on new information. The sharing of information through the mass media can influence the way an individual think, feel, and even the way a person act. The effects arising due to consumption of media content is called media effects. Potter (2012, p. 10) stated, “media-influenced effects are those things that occur as a result—either in part or in whole—from media influence”. If there is a change in individuals caused by exposure to the media, then the media is said to give effect. Exposure to political information on media and political websites is likely to increase people’s campaign interest (Bartels & Rahn, 2000). “Interest, in turn, affects turnout even when one controls for political knowledge” (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995). “Media use is instrumental in increasing political knowledge, efficacy and even voter turnout” (McLeod & McDonald, 1985). Sunstein (2001) has recommended, “People’s increasing ability to customize their political information will have a polarizing impact on democracy as media users become less likely to encounter information that challenges their partisan viewpoints”.

The web has emerged as a place where many citizens look for politically oriented information and political activities are seen on the web. The internet is certainly an instrument in providing direct information and engagement, but what makes them special is that they also signal flexibility, care for

marginal voters, and political entrepreneurship. Internet-literate urban society is expected to prefer social media as a reference to know more about the candidates in political elections.

The choice of content in social media can be a powerful predictor for voters. The ease of internet access and diversity of media choice can be a predictor of increased knowledge. "Increasing penetration of new media technologies should increase the difference in turnout rates between those who like news and those who prefer entertainment, both because political knowledge and turnout are tightly related and because exposure to political information motivates people to vote" (Prior, 2005). Social media increases the political knowledge and encourage involvement in the election. "People's media content preferences become the key to understanding the political implications of new media" (Prior, 2005).

The individual who originally not interested in engaging in political activity can change and become involved politically because of the advantages of the internet. The internet offers a variety of convenience for many people, that is, the ease of using it or ease to access. In addition, the internet is also improving access to information; allows users to perform political expression and political action online, affiliated with the citizens who support, comfort or novelty to engage online, all of which can attract people who are disillusioned with traditional ways of participating in politics (Boulianne, 2009, p. 195). Besides, the internet also can encourage someone to donate to organizations (Simon, 1997). The internet allows individuals to quickly and easily go to a candidate's website and contribute electronically (Haynes & Pitts, 2009).

Social media can significantly reduce the cost of participating and can "compensate for the disadvantages of undisciplined groups by reducing the costs of coordination" (Shirky, 2011). Because when someone uses the internet to gather information and then by a mere click a mouse, join an online protest, sign an online petition. Furthermore, recruit a friend to join a cause via his or her network connections, or donate money via online contribution form, the cost of participating is now far less expensive for the individual to engage in online political activity than it is for the offline equivalent.

With all these advantages, at least three categories of people are likely to benefit from the use of the internet in election campaigns. First, political actors, because the objective of the election campaign is to attract voters and win elections (Lock & Harris, 1996). Second, voters, who gather information from sites maintained by the contesting candidates for their voting decisions (Carlson & Strandberg, 2007), and third, democracy, a system of governance that allows people to get involved. The internet as a new communication technology holds the promise to propagate democratic values and change traditional one-way processes of political communication. The internet has become a very important technology for grassroots democracy by facilitating discussions and collective actions of citizens, which strengthens democracy (Oblak & Zeljan, 2007).

The internet reduces the barriers to participation and thus reduces social inequality that exists in public life. In addition, the factors of political knowledge, political experience, years of education, the level of interest in politics, and strength of partisanship also became a driving factor of someone

3. Social media provides a link forwarding service that users can use to share candidate images, audio or video files, statements, etc. such as:
 - a. On Facebook, visitors can 'share a link'
 - b. On Twitter, visitors can 'mention' friends or others in candidate account
 - c. On YouTube, visitors can 'share' candidates YouTube
 - d. Users can 'share a link' online game 'Save Jakarta' to a friend or another person's email address
4. Users participate in an *online forum* with details:
 - a. On Facebook, users can give 'like', or 'comments' on candidate status
 - b. On Twitter, users can 'reply', or choose 'favorite' to others or candidate tweet
 - c. On YouTube, users can give 'like' or 'comments' on candidate video
 - d. On online game 'Save Jakarta', users can give 'like' or 'comment' on candidate message

This research uses a survey of university students in Jakarta. Students are limited to only those who registered as a student in the department accredited 'A'. Typically, the department accredited 'A' become the favorite department so that students selected strictly. Furthermore, according to Tolbert & McNeal (2003) the social and economic characteristics of voters, education, and income are the most important variable in explaining whether one vote. A well-informed population is somehow stimulated to be interested in political matters. Therefore, students who will become the sample of this study are expected to think logically because they are considered to have cognitive abilities more than others. Based on data from the Indonesian Education Ministry, the numbers of departments who have grade 'A' are 30 departments at 14 universities in Jakarta (Badan Akreditasi Nasional-Perguruan Tinggi, 2013). The sample size needed is 385 students from total population is 976,242 (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2010). Furthermore, researchers determined that in each department, takes 12-13 respondents. The random technique used is lottery method. Then researcher will give a questionnaire to students to be filled. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient will be used to measure the association between independent and dependent variables. The measure, represented by the letter r , varies from -1 to +1. A zero correlation indicates that there is no correlation between the variables.

Results

Gender of the respondents in this study is 116 (30.1%) were male and 269 respondents (69.9%) were female. Three hundred and forty-five respondents (345 or 89%) had social media accounts for more than > 2 years, 34 respondents (9%) had accounts 1-2 years, and three respondents or 1% had social media accounts for 1-6 months and those who had social media account for 7-12 months is 3 persons. Social media used for ≥ 4 hours every day by 177 or 46% respondents to get political information and those that use 3 - < 4 hours per day are 127 or 33% respondents. Related public statements on social media, 361 or 94% of respondents do on Facebook, 358 or 93% on Twitter and on YouTube made by 350 or 91% of respondents.

The majority of respondents said that they became friends of the candidate in social media as stated by 327 or 85% of respondents who subscribed candidates' channel on YouTube, 352 or

91% of the respondents became followers, and 372 or 97% of the respondents became friends of the candidate on Facebook. There are 376 or 98% said 'share' of the candidate's Facebook content to others, on Twitter, this is done by 356 or 92% of respondents, and 332 or 86% of respondents did it on YouTube. On Facebook, there are 381 (99%) respondents' stated that they posted 'like' on the candidate's Facebook account while on Twitter, respondents who posted 'favorite' are 362 (94%) respondents and 327 or 85% on YouTube. Respondents who posted comments in social media candidates is 381 or 99% on Facebook, 362 or 94% on Twitter and 308 or 80% on YouTube.

Freedom of Expression in Social Media and Decision to Vote

Many research findings state that the media can help increase voter turnout, because not only it can provide various types of information that can improve the knowledge of voters about the candidates, but also information related to the election itself so that voters can determine decisions. In addition, other studies have also suggested that the media could increase voter interest in the election. Related influence of social media content, especially with the excess that is able to give freedom of expression to its users, on the decision to vote of young voters in the election, can be seen in Table 1.

Related influence media content on the decision of young voters in the election, can be seen in Table 1. There is a correlation between becoming candidates' friend on Facebook ($r = 0.928$) and on Twitter ($r = 0.893$) with the decision to vote, which can be considered a strong effect. Subscribe candidate channel on YouTube ($r = 0.832$) and become a player in the online game 'Save Jakarta' ($r = 0.775$) correlated with the decision to vote, which can be considered a strong effect because of $r \geq 0.7$. Make a public statement in the 'Timeline' ($r = 0.885$) and share with other social media users ($r = 0.806$) have a relationship with the decision to vote, which can be considered highly correlated. Likewise, there is a true relationship between post 'like' ($r = 0.829$) and 'comments' ($r = 0.853$) with a decision to vote, which can be considered a large effect. The decision to vote has relationship with 'retweet' ($r = 0.825$), 'favorite' ($r = 0.845$) and 'reply' ($r = 0.839$), also a 'mention' friends or others on Twitter ($r = 0.812$), which can be considered a large effect or highly correlated.

On YouTube, 'like' ($r = 0.897$), and 'comments' ($r = 0.862$), have a true relationship with the decision to vote in elections, which can be considered a large effect. While express the views or opinions through audio-video files are uploaded on YouTube ($r = 0.817$) and 'share a link', have a strong relationship with the decision to vote. Make a public statement by the 'share quote' to friends or others on online game 'Save Jakarta' ($r = 0.856$), share a link to friends or others ($r = 0.869$), post 'like' ($r = 0.786$) and 'comments' ($r = 0.728$) correlated with decision to vote, which can be considered a large effect. It concluded that become friends, followers, subscribers, or players, as well as making public statements, share a link, post 'like' and 'comments' in social media influence the decision to vote young voters in elections.

15,059 polling stations (Afifah, 2012). Increasing the number of voters in Jakarta Governor Election 2012 proved that the use of social media affects political participation.

Social media allows users to have more content to select, more channels and platforms from which to receive it, and more opportunities than ever before to comments upon the political events and issues of the day. Users have the freedom to choose and use the media they like or believe. "The internet can propel individuals into political life especially in terms of allowing them to gather political information, connect with others, mobilize, recruit individuals to causes and actions because the internet can significantly reduce the cost of participating" (Resnick, 2004).

Information or news can be obtained in an interactive and social. This means that the information is not only obtained through the media only but can also be obtained through conversations with others when using social media. Social media has made people no longer just be passive consumers of media but has changed the situation so that everyone today can be a producer and consumer of information. Benkler (2006) states that the emergence of the networked public sphere allows individuals to take advantage of capabilities that make them greater participants in the conversation. Freedom of expression in social media with ease to express an opinion, comment, be a friend of the candidate, a follower, a subscriber, and become players in an online game on candidates, as well as easy to share links and to post 'like', encouraging users to participate in election and influencing their decision to vote. The technology allows individuals the means not only to build a network of connections but also to be influenced and to influence that network exponentially (Bond, Fariss, Jones, Kramer, Marlow, Settle, and Fowler, 2012).

Unlike the political participation in the era of traditional politics, participatory politics in the era of social media tend to be a two-way dialogue, the freedom to express opinions that support a candidate or against a candidate, trust in social networking, and easily share links, stories, pictures, video, etc. In other words the political participation in the social media era more interactive, peer-based, and not guided by political parties or mass media (Bennett, 1998). Young people will form a new political group online, deliver opinions and thoughts of politics through blogs, share political videos via their social networks or provide commentary on the message conveyed through social media. Youth can write and spread the information they get from traditional media, distributed between their networks, and provide comments to help their peers, think about information or issues in society. The internet is also improving access to information; allows users to perform political expression and political action online, affiliated with the citizens who support, comfort or novelty to engage online, all of which can attract people who are disillusioned with traditional ways of participating in politics (Boulianne, 2009). Moreover, many agree that political information and participation are important to democracy (Cassel & Lo, 1997).

Apathetic users, in particular, were more likely to see increased interactivity as a sign of greater candidate responsiveness and trustworthiness (Sundar et al., 1998). Political observers have long lauded the internet for its ability to enhance voter engagement and re-engage voters through interactivity (Corrado & Firestone, 1996). Youth see that engage in participatory politics by doing activities such as status updates, tweets, share, post comments, etc. are ways to get involved in politics (Bennett, 1998). The internet reduces the barriers to participation and thus reduces social inequality that exists in public life (Tolbert & McNeal, 2003). A growing portion of the population has chosen to learn about and contribute to political life through digital technologies (Howard, 2005).

Discussions with friends who are interested or active in politics can help people learn about “the reasons for participating while reinforcing the idea that such behavior is desirable among one’s peers” (McClurg, 2003).

Many citizens rely on their trusted friendship network and are vetting official information they hear through their friendship ties. They are paying attention to news and information shared by their trusted online contacts. Social networking platform has become a way to validate information as well as have become a tool to increase awareness of a particular issue or topic because it is attractive in their social network. Social media are additional channels for public engagement and participation as well as increased transparency, which might, in turn, lead to increased public trust in government operations (Mergel, 2012). This “social interaction creates opportunities for individuals to gather information about politics that allows them to live beyond personal resource constraints, thereby supporting the political activity of many people” (McClurg, 2003). “Social interaction has a value-added an effect that helps people better understand when personal characteristics and resources contribute to involvement. Social exchange exposes people to a social supply of information that broadens their exposure to and understanding of politics” (Huckfeldt, 2001). Since individual understanding, information, resources, and ability are inherently limited, this means that social interaction provides people with another opportunity to accrue resources that lower the barriers to political participation. Other findings in this study are the more a person believes the content of social media, then this will encourage the person to be more frequent and longer use of social media. Furthermore, the social network in social media also affects people because we generally trust friends or people we have let into our social networks and are more like to listen to what they say or recommend (Pavlik & McIntosh, 2011). The majority of voters who seek political information online, using this information to help them decide how to vote (Haynes & Pitts, 2009). Despite the presence of social media makes the users get a variety of benefits, but the rapid flow of information encountered when using social media, prompting netizens to assess and constantly reviewing before thousands of such information can be trusted. This requires digital literacy and logical thinking in addressing information obtained from social media.

Ethical approval: All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

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Tables

Table 1. The correlation between freedoms of expression in social media with the decision to choose

Freedom of Expression	Decision to Vote			
	Facebook	Twitter	YouTube	Online Game
Become members of the group	0.928	0.893	0.832	0.775
Posting public statement	0.885	0.825	0.817	0.856
Share	0.806	0.812	0.852	0.869
Posting 'like'	0.829	0.845	0.897	0.786
Posting 'comment'	0.853	0.839	0.862	0.728

Note. $\alpha = 0.05$

Table 2. The correlation between freedoms of expression in social media with participation in elections

Freedom of Expression	Participation in Elections			
	Facebook	Twitter	YouTube	Online Game
Become members of the group	0.797	0.823	0.756	0.856
Posting public statement	0.740	0.837	0.749	0.758
Share	0.756	0.742	0.761	0.769
Posting 'like'	0.749	0.867	0.758	0.852
Posting 'comment'	0.759	0.873	0.782	0.859

Note. $\alpha = 0.05$

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