JOURNAL OF
**COMMUNICATION &
PUBLIC RELATIONS**

Social Media's Democratic Footprint: A Review of Political Participation Trends

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ABSTRACT

This literature review examines social media's role in increasing public political engagement in the digital era, synthesizing 17 scientific sources from the last five years. Digital transformation has reshaped political participation, fostering faster, more open, and decentralized interactions. The study explores five key themes: the theoretical basis of political participation, mechanisms for increasing engagement through social media (e.g., shaping public opinion via digital platforms and phenomena like "Emergency Warning"), digital mobilization strategies of political figures (illustrated by the "Anies Bubble" discourse and its use of symbols and narratives), the impact of information technology on political communication and elite-public interaction, and the challenges and opportunities of digital democracy, including disinformation, polarization, and digital literacy gaps. Findings indicate social media's strategic role in promoting broader political participation. However, realizing its full potential necessitates robust digital literacy, adaptive regulations, and responsible platform governance to enhance the quality of digital democracy.
Keywords: Social Media, Political Participation, Digital Democracy, Literature Review, Indonesia

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia as a democratic country that highly values the principles of human rights, including freedom of expression in public spaces (Oceani, 2023). This freedom is guaranteed by law, so that every citizen has the right to channel their aspirations. This includes voicing support, submitting criticism, or providing input on policies taken by the government. With this legal protection, the community has an important role in ensuring that government policies are implemented in accordance with the needs and desires of the people. In addition, public control over government policies is one real manifestation of community participation in maintaining transparency and accountability in state administration (Yendra & Bond, 2022).

Participation and democracy are two complementary concepts. It can be concluded that democracy is not fully achieved if citizens do not have the freedom to participate in the processes of national life. Low levels of participation reflect citizens' low understanding and involvement in political activities.

The continuous advancement of electronic media technology, coupled with the support of the internet, has given rise to various social media platforms that individuals can utilize for a variety of purposes. Besides serving as a communication tool in

cyberspace, social media, which falls into the new media category, has also become a means of building self-image, including for politicians. Public reactions and assessments of politicians' posts often influence the level of political participation of individuals, including the younger generation. This generation is known for its creative and critical thinking, which also determines the form and intensity of their political participation.

The development of information technology has led to a shift in the way communication media is used. Previously, traditional media, such as electronic and print, have now transformed into new, internet-based media, which has become the primary channel for accessing social media. Social media is now utilized as a political communication strategy, particularly in the context of general elections (Cobis & Cangara, 2023).

According to Saldana (in Arumsari et al., 2020), social media has a significant influence on people's political participation behavior, particularly in the context of forming public opinion online. In his research, he found that exposure to political content on social media can increase users' political interest, encourage engagement in political discussions, and even influence voting decisions. However, Saldana also emphasized that this influence is ambivalent: on the one hand, it encourages participation, but on the other hand, it increases the risk of information bias because social media algorithms tend to amplify exposure to content that aligns with individual preferences. This has the potential to create a closed information space, narrow the diversity of views, and reduce the public's ability to critically evaluate political issues.

Currently, various social media platforms such as Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, YouTube, and instant messaging apps like WhatsApp remain highly sought-after platforms for users from various backgrounds. While offering various conveniences and benefits, the use of social media also presents a number of challenges, one of which relates to the shift in society's culture from traditional patterns to a digital ecosystem. The presence of social media has had a significant impact on various aspects of life, including social norms, cultural values, and collective ethics (Arifianto et al., 2020). Currently, social media has even become a primary source of access to information (Maharani, 2024). However, this condition is also vulnerable to being exploited to spread false information. Misinformation can spread rapidly, especially when amplified by differences in political interests, cultural backgrounds, ethnic identities, or religious beliefs (Rahmawati et al., 2023).

Social media can also be used by the state as an instrument to shape public perception, which can ultimately influence citizens' levels of political engagement (Arniti, 2020). Public involvement in political activities is a key component in realizing popular sovereignty and plays a central role in the sustainability of the democratic system (Arifin et al., 2025). When public political participation is high, the process of democratization and political development, particularly in developing countries like Indonesia, has a greater opportunity for positive development. Therefore, encouraging increased political participation is crucial for strengthening national progress and state stability (Ida et al., 2025).

In a democratic system, such as Indonesia's, public opinion plays a crucial role. No government can survive or succeed without listening to and paying attention to what the public thinks. Democratic governments always strive to create policies aimed at the overall welfare of the people (Rusi et al., 2022). Social media plays a role in shaping public opinion and providing a space for the public to express their aspirations, ultimately exerting a significant influence on the direction of government policy. Therefore, active public participation on social media platforms is crucial to ensuring that democratic principles remain upheld and relevant in facing the challenges of the digital age.

If the dynamics of political participation through social media are not managed properly, the potential for socio-political damage becomes very real. According to Jiang et al. (2021), social media tends to create political echo chambers, interaction spaces dominated by homogeneous views. Due to its personalized features, this situation can reinforce political bias, narrow public discourse, and deepen social polarization. When individuals are only exposed to information that aligns with their beliefs, the opportunity for dialogue across perspectives is greatly reduced. The problem of political polarization triggered by echo chambers and social media algorithms is inextricably linked to the widespread spread of hoaxes and disinformation. Personalized algorithms filter information that aligns with user preferences, thus creating a homogeneous information space and reinforcing political bias. In such an environment, hoaxes become more easily believed and spread unchallenged, as these misleading messages reinforce group beliefs.

Research by (Nurdin, 2024) shows that political disinformation during elections in Indonesia did not occur randomly but was carried out systematically as part of an organized political communication strategy. This research reveals that disinformation is used to shape public perception through the manipulation of information to favor certain candidates while discrediting political opponents, involving anonymous accounts, bots, and structured messaging networks on social media. These findings confirm that social media has become an arena for political contestation that not only facilitates participation but also opens up space for manipulative bias.

Meanwhile, findings from Sarjito (2021) deepen our understanding of the social impact of the spread of political hoaxes. The study shows that widespread misinformation on social media not only reduces public trust in the election process but also creates psychological instability and doubts about the legitimacy of state institutions. This has the potential to trigger a crisis of public trust, weaken social cohesion, and create distance between society and democratic institutions.

In the context of digital democracy, these two studies show that without adaptive regulations and systematic improvements in digital literacy, social media can become a destructive tool that increases inequality in participation and disrupts the integrity of democracy, which should be inclusive and just.

Amid the high penetration of social media in political life, studies such as this are crucial to understanding its impact on public participation. This research is relevant and

needed. This research was conducted to explore how social media plays a role in increasing public political participation in the digital era, using a literature review method as the primary approach. The main focus of this study is to identify patterns of social media use in political activities, explore the challenges faced, and explore opportunities that can be utilized to strengthen more inclusive and participatory democratic practices.

LITERATURE REVIEW OR RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Political Participation

According to Huntington and Nelson, as cited in (Juleha et al., 2024), political participation refers to individual actions as citizens in an effort to influence the direction of policies or decisions made by the government. Consistent with this view, Ramlan Surbakti explains that political participation is a form of public involvement in the state's decision-making process (Salim, 2020).

Huntington and Nelson's perspectives focus on individual actions in political decision-making, while Ramlan Surbakti emphasizes citizen participation in the overall democratic process. Both can complement each other in explaining how social media can be a channel not only for passive participation, such as liking political posts, but also for active participation, such as digital campaigns and online petitions.

Political participation can be classified into two categories: active and passive (Chang & Wu, 2022). Active participation includes activities such as electing leaders, criticizing government policies, and providing input for policy improvement. Conversely, passive participation includes complying with government regulations, accepting and implementing decisions made, and providing suggestions or alternatives regarding public policy.

Political participation takes many forms, including involvement in elections, lobbying to influence government decisions, joining organizations that influence policy, and even building relationships with government officials for personal or group gain (Achu et al., 2010) Furthermore, political participation can also manifest in acts of violence, although this is not an ideal way to express aspirations.

Political participation comes in various forms and levels of intensity. These activities typically vary in frequency and the extent of involvement required. Most people tend to participate through relatively light and time-consuming activities, such as voting in elections. On the other hand, only a small number of individuals are fully engaged in politics and consistently active (Ridestian in Juleha et al., 2024)..

Social media

Social media is a set of digital platforms designed to facilitate collaboration, information exchange, and interaction between users through internet-based services (Alper, 2024). Due to the rapid development of the internet, the technology and features available on social media are constantly evolving, making it more of a general term encompassing a

wide range of uses and designs than simply describing its form or type (Manik Pratiwi, 2020).

Van Dijk, in (Juleha et al., 2024), explains that social media is a digital platform that emphasizes user presence and provides a space for them to interact and collaborate online. In this case, social media can be understood as a virtual tool that facilitates the development of social relationships and the expansion of networks between users. On the other hand, Boyd, in the same source, defines social media as a collection of applications that enable individuals and communities to interact, share information, communicate, and even collaborate or play together online. Furthermore, social media also has an important characteristic in the form of the ability to produce content directly by users (User-Generated Content/UGC), namely the type of content created and shared by users without going through the editorial process that applies in conventional media (Armayani et al., 2021).

The concept of social media as user-generated content (Boyd, Van Dijk) when linked to the form of active participation expressed by Surbakti, shows that digital platforms open up unconventional spaces for political participation, such as the creation of political content by ordinary people that can influence public opinion at large.

Digital Era
The digital era refers to a phase of technological development in which humans can communicate intensively despite geographical distances (Anisti et al., 2023). During this period, access to information has become extremely rapid and can even be obtained directly or in real time. This era is also often associated with globalization, the process of interconnecting countries around the world through the exchange of ideas, products, cultural values, and views. This phenomenon is largely driven by significant advances in communications, transportation, and internet technology, which accelerate cross-border integration globally.

This research draws on the concept of political participation as defined by Huntington and Nelson as the initial basis for understanding, which is then developed in the context of the digital era through the approaches of new media and network society as explained by Castells. The development of digital technology has not only changed the way people communicate but also reshaped social and political structures. Manuel Castells Miconi (2022) introduced the concept of network society, namely a social order built on digital connectivity and real-time information exchange (Herari et al., 2024).

In a network society, political communication is no longer vertical and centralized, but spreads horizontally through social media and other digital channels. Castells also emphasized the importance of the concept of mass self-communication, namely the ability of individuals to produce and disseminate political messages independently without going through formal institutions. This idea remains relevant in contemporary studies, as evidenced by Miconi's re-emphasis on the role of network society in bridging the relationship between social structure and digital agency in the modern era.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a systematic literature review design with a descriptive qualitative approach. A systematic literature review was chosen to in-depth examine theoretical and empirical findings regarding the role of social media in increasing political participation in the digital era (Tan et al., 2024).

Data collection techniques were conducted through searching for scientific articles in various databases such as Google Scholar, Sinta, university journal portals, and also several social media posts to obtain relevant data. Keywords used in the search included: "social media and political participation," "digital democracy," "social media and political participation," and "digital literacy in politics." Inclusion criteria included articles published within the last five years, written in Indonesian or English, from peer-reviewed journals, and having direct relevance to the research focus. Meanwhile, non-academic articles and publications without scientific references were excluded from the study. A total of 17 articles that met the criteria were used as primary sources in this study.

The data analysis process was conducted using a thematic approach, starting with coding important information from each article, then grouping the data into five main themes: (1) the concept of political participation, (2) mechanisms for increasing participation through social media, (3) digital mobilization and its influence, (4) the impact of information technology on political participation, and (5) challenges and opportunities for social media in the context of digital democracy.

Information from each source was analyzed narratively to identify patterns, relationships between concepts, and relevant theoretical implications. This design allows the study to produce an in-depth conceptual synthesis and mapping of key issues, thus contributing to the development of literature on digital democracy in Indonesia. The thematic approach in this study refers to the thematic analysis method according to Braun & Clarke (2006), which includes the stages of data familiarization, coding, grouping themes, and narrative synthesis (Naeem et al., 2023).

Outlines the systematic application of thematic analysis in the context of social and business research in Indonesia (Sutoyo & Rahayu, 2022). By following the stages in the systematic literature review process, this research is expected to produce independent and conceptually and contextually relevant findings (Yam, 2024).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Our analysis reveals that the fundamental understanding of political participation, traditionally rooted in civic awareness and governmental legitimacy, has undergone a significant transformation in the digital era. The advent of social media has not merely expanded avenues for engagement but has fundamentally reshaped the dynamics of public involvement, creating both unprecedented opportunities and inherent challenges for democratic processes. The following table synthesizes the core conceptual shifts and

mechanisms at play, highlighting how digital platforms now mediate citizen interaction with political

Table 1: Key Points of Political Participation in the Digital Era

Aspects	Core Idea	Mechanisms & Influencers	Implication & Impact
Political Participation	Citizen involvement in influencing political decisions.	Drives government legitimacy and provides public oversight. Ensures political rights are protected and fulfilled.	Expressing support, crit pointing out weaknesses, submitting criticism to encourage change.
Mechanisms for Enhancement	Social media's interactive nature and mass media's authoritative role combine to boost engagement.	Social Media: Direct communication, opinion sharing, content production, digital campaigns (e.g., #peringatandararurat). Creates a "network society" (Castells). Mass Media: Disseminates verified political information, provides context and validation.	Increased political awareness, enhanced digital literacy, and broader citizen participation in democracy.
Digital Mobilization	Active, decentralized political participation facilitated by digital communication technology.	Formation of "network society" (Castells) enables rapid political coordination and independent discourse. Example: "Anies Bubble" phenomenon, leveraging K-Pop fandom aesthetics for political support.	Shifts from hierarchical to decentralized and viral participation. Limitations: Can be symbolic (clicktivism), lacking organizational structure or tangible policy outcomes. Success depends on socio-political context and literacy.
Impact of Information Technology	Fundamental revolution in how society engages politically through social media.	Provides open, rapid access to information, facilitating discussions, opinion expression, and support for political movements. Functions as a platform for public expression, fostering transparency and accountability. Strengthens political mobilization by reaching wider audiences and enabling direct voter communication.	Broadens participation spaces, empowering previously underrepresented groups. Risks: Amplifies polarization (echo chambers, filter bubbles), spreads disinformation, and encourages superficial "clicktivism."
Challenges & Opportunities	The dual nature of social media's effect on digital democracy.	Challenges: Massive disinformation, algorithmic reinforcement of polarization, low digital literacy, difficulty in verifying information, erosion of institutional trust.	Potential for a more horizontal, responsive, and community-based democracy. Mitigation: Requires adaptive regulations,

Aspects	Core Idea	Mechanisms & Influencers	Implication & Impact
		Opportunities: Lowers participation barriers, expands access for marginalized groups, provides free space for political expression, and enables collective action and social movements.	transparent platform governance, and enhanced critical digital literacy to ensure meaningful participation.

The Concept of Political Participation

Political participation is influenced by the extent to which individuals possess political awareness and trust in the legitimacy and performance of the government. Therefore, public political involvement is strongly linked to the sustainability of democracy and the recognition of the government's legitimacy. These three elements form an interconnected framework. In a democratic context, political participation influences the government's legitimacy in the eyes of the public. For example, in elections, the level of political participation influences the extent to which the public legitimizes the elected candidate. Every citizen has specific preferences and interests that influence their political choices. Participation in elections not only reflects the right to vote but also serves as a mechanism for public oversight of government. The level of oversight varies depending on the extent of political participation. Besides being a key element in a democratic system, political participation is also closely related to the protection and fulfillment of political rights held by each individual (Arniti, 2020).

Public involvement in politics is a concrete manifestation of democratic values, where citizens are given the space to participate directly through the General Election mechanism. In this context, the public plays a strategic role in determining the leaders who will run the government and determine the direction of political policy. This aligns with Suryadi's view, as cited in (Arniti 2020), which emphasizes that voters hold a crucial position in a country's political process. Political participation reflects an individual's intention to actively engage in political activities through various forms of involvement. These forms can include exercising their right to vote, participating in social or political organizations, engaging in discussions on public issues, participating in mass rallies, becoming members of political parties or independent organizations, and contributing to campaign activities or community service according to their respective capacities. Arther, as cited in (Arniti 2020), emphasizes that these actions are concrete manifestations of citizen participation in political life.

As digital technology advances, forms of political participation have also expanded into the digital space, particularly through social media. This aligns with Huntington & Nelson's view that political participation is the act of citizens influencing political decisions, which in the digital era has shifted to the virtual space through social media. Furthermore, in line with Ramlan Surbakti's thinking, citizen participation now occurs not only in formal forms but also through active involvement in online political discussions and the production of digital content. When linked to the concept of user-

generated content. According to Boyd and Van Dijk, people are now not only consumers of information, but also producers of political messages, which emphasizes the shift from passive participation to active digital-based participation.

According to Syamsudin in (Arniti, 2020), the benefits of political participation include several main aspects, namely: (1) expressing support for the government or ruler by sending representatives, submitting statements of support, or voting for candidates supported by political parties; (2) pointing out weaknesses in the government with the aim of encouraging the process of evaluation, correction, or policy reform; and (3) submitting criticism as a form of resistance to the ruler to encourage structural change in the government and political system. Every individual as a citizen has equal rights and opportunities to assess and choose their leaders. Therefore, political participation, especially through general elections, has a very crucial role in democratic life.

Based on research (Sa'ban et al., 2019), factors that influence political participation include several main aspects.

1. Mass media plays a role in triggering political awareness, especially in the modern era, where access to information has become increasingly easy. Through these media channels, the public can obtain information about candidates, including those for mayor and deputy mayor.
2. Personality factors, including the development of religious values from an early age, also have a significant influence. In the context of BauBau City's strong religious community, political preferences tend to be directed toward candidates considered trustworthy and responsible.
3. The political situation in the region, where political calm without internal or external pressure can increase people's freedom, awareness and desire to participate in political activities.

Participation Enhancement Mechanism

Social media plays a strategic role in encouraging increased public political engagement. With its interactive and real-time nature, social media provides a space for people to communicate directly, share views, and discuss political issues broadly (Karjaluoto in Susanto, 2017). Through these platforms, citizens are not only consumers of political information but can also act as content producers that influence public opinion, participate in political awareness campaigns, and engage in open online discussions.

Meanwhile, mass media serves as an institution for disseminating formal and educational political information. It provides verified news and serves as a primary reference for the public in understanding public policy and the election process (Blake and Haroldsen, in Susanto, 2017). In the political information system, mass media plays a role in safeguarding the accuracy and integrity of information at the macro level (Donohue et al., in Susanto, 2017), while social media serves as a channel for dialogue and mobilization at the grassroots level.

The combination of mass media and social media creates a complementary political information ecosystem. On the one hand, social media facilitates active and

rapid participation by individuals or communities; on the other, mass media provides context and validation to circulating information. Together, both contribute to increasing political awareness, digital literacy, and citizen participation in the democratic process.

Conceptually, the role of social media can be explained through Castells's concept of a network society, a society formed through flexible, real-time, and decentralized digital information networks. In this structure, social and political relations no longer depend on physical space or formal institutions, but are instead built through digital connectivity. Social media has become a key infrastructure in a network society, enabling the horizontal distribution of political information, creating open, participatory spaces, and facilitating cross-border political discussion and interaction.

This phenomenon can be concretely observed in several contemporary political events in Indonesia, demonstrating the power of digital mobilization through social media. The forms of digital political participation mediated by social media are diverse, ranging from passive activities such as liking or sharing political content to active actions such as initiating digital campaigns, creating online petitions, or creating visual content based on political issues. Political phenomena such as the rise of the viral hashtag #peringatandararurat demonstrate that social media has become a new, more spontaneous and horizontal channel for political mobilization.

Figure 1: Post by the @MataNajwa Account Regarding Emergency Alert Keywords on Social Media Platform X (2024)

In this context, political actors are no longer limited to political parties or state institutions, but also include ordinary individuals, civil society groups, celebrities, and digital influencers with broad audience reach. Furthermore, the style of political

communication has undergone a transformation, from formal and bureaucratic to personal, fast-paced, and based on visual narratives. Political memes, short videos, and opinion pieces based on personal experiences have become new ways to convey political messages and shape public opinion. This marks a shift from traditional political participation to more fluid and decentralized digital democratic practices.

Digital Mobilization

Political mobilization through social media reflects an increasingly active and decentralized form of digital political participation. According to Huntington and Nelson (Juleha et al., 2024), political participation can be defined as the active involvement of citizens in influencing the direction and content of political decision-making processes. The development of digital communication technology has enabled this form of participation to shift from formal engagement to more fluid and horizontal network-based participation. Castells, in Andrea Miconi (2022), also explains through the concept of network society that social and political relations are now formed through real-time digital information flows that are no longer bound by geographic or institutional boundaries. Social media acts as a catalyst in this process, enabling rapid political coordination, cross-regional participation, and the independent production of political discourse by individuals and groups. One concrete manifestation of this form of digital political mobilization can be seen in the "Anies Bubble" phenomenon that emerged on social media in the lead-up to the 2024 elections.

An interesting example of digital mobilization in Indonesia is the "Anies Bubble" phenomenon, a movement supporting presidential candidate Anies Baswedan that emerged organically on social media, adopting the aesthetics of K-Pop fandom. Supporting accounts like @aniesbubble used visual language, memes, and narratives typical of the fangirl world to create an emotional connection with a young audience. This strategy demonstrates that social media functions not merely as a means of disseminating political information but also as a space for the production of new political meanings and symbols. This phenomenon reflects a form of network-based political mobilization, as described by Castells (Miconi, 2022), where participation is no longer hierarchical but decentralized and viral. Although structurally uncoordinated, this campaign demonstrates how cultural identity can trigger political engagement among young people in the digital landscape.

Figure 2: Posts from the @aniesbubble account on Social Media Platform X (2023)

While digital mobilization has significant potential for expanding political participation, its effectiveness does not always translate directly into policy change or tangible political outcomes. Online mobilization is often spontaneous, lacking a strong organizational structure or sustained advocacy strategy. Furthermore, symbolic forms of participation such as clicktivism or hashtag activism can create the illusion of engagement without being followed by concrete political action. Thus, while social media opens up new opportunities for political mobilization, its success remains dependent on the socio-political context, organizational capacity, and political literacy of the people involved.

The Impact of Information Technology on Political Participation in the Social Media Era
Advances in information technology, particularly in the form of social media, have fundamentally revolutionized the way society engages in political activities. Access to political information has become more open and rapid, enabling individuals to engage in public discussions, express opinions, and even support political movements without geographic limitations or formal structures (Harahap, 2020). This has opened up broader spaces for participation, including for previously underrepresented groups. This transformation aligns with the concept of a network society, where social media functions as a digital infrastructure that shapes socio-political relationships through real-time and horizontal connectivity.

Social media serves as a space for public expression, enabling people to express their opinions, voice their aspirations, and engage in public discourse, including initiating campaigns or social movements aimed at influencing policy direction. Furthermore, social media also contributes to fostering transparency and accountability in a

democratic system. This is realized through the public's ability to monitor government performance, disclose information regarding irregularities, and openly express demands. Digital technology also strengthens the political mobilization process by facilitating more efficient political activity organization. Through social media, election campaigns or political movements can reach a wider audience, rapidly garner support, and establish direct communication with voters, thereby strengthening the relationship between political actors and the public within a democratic framework (Fitriani et al., 2023).

It's important to note that information technology also poses risks to the quality of participation. Social media algorithms can amplify polarization through echo chambers and filter bubbles, and facilitate the spread of disinformation. Quantitative increases in participation don't necessarily have a substantive impact if they are merely symbolic, as in the phenomenon of clicktivism. Therefore, strong digital literacy, adaptive regulations, and platform design that encourages open dialogue are needed to ensure inclusive, reflective, and meaningful digital political participation.

Challenges of Digital Political Participation in the Social Media Era
While social media opens up new spaces for political participation, it also presents serious challenges in the context of digital democracy. One such challenge is the massive and rapid spread of disinformation, which can confuse the public, undermine trust in institutions, and undermine the quality of political discourse. Furthermore, platform algorithms that prioritize sensational content can reinforce echo chambers and filter bubbles, deepening social polarization and hindering cross-group dialogue. Low levels of digital literacy and the ability to verify information among the public also pose significant obstacles to ensuring informed and responsible participation.

Despite these challenges, social media also offers significant opportunities to strengthen democratic practices. It can lower structural barriers to political participation, expand access for marginalized groups, and provide a relatively free space for political expression. Citizens can collectively voice issues, garner public support, and even mobilize social movements without relying on traditional media or political institutions. This opportunity demonstrates the potential for a more horizontal, responsive, and community-based democracy, in line with the spirit of active participation in a network society, as Castells (in Miconi, 2022).

To maximize opportunities and mitigate challenges, a multi-level strategy is needed. The government needs to develop regulations that protect democratic space while preventing the misuse of digital media. Digital platforms must be transparent in their algorithms and responsible in content moderation. Meanwhile, the public needs to continue developing critical digital literacy. When accompanied by a balanced approach, social media can become a means of strengthening political participation and a more inclusive, adaptive, and sustainable democracy, rather than becoming a tool of disruption that weakens the quality of democratic governance.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study indicate that social media plays an increasingly significant role in shaping patterns of political participation in the digital era. A systematic literature review reveals that social media is not only a means of political communication but also a participatory space that facilitates more open and democratic political mobilization, education, and representation. Social media expands access to political discourse, empowers civil society, and creates new pathways to participation previously unavailable in conventional political systems.

However, the emergence of social media also brings complex challenges. Political polarization, the spread of disinformation, and unequal access and digital literacy pose serious obstacles to building a healthy digital public sphere. The role of algorithms in shaping users' political preferences also has the potential to reduce diversity of views and reinforce confirmation bias. Therefore, the success of digital democracy is crucially determined by the public's digital literacy capacity, platform transparency, and regulations that adapt to technological dynamics.

Thus, collaboration between the state, civil society, and digital platform providers is needed to ensure that social media can be optimally utilized to strengthen inclusive and sustainable political participation. Digital literacy must be a strategic public policy agenda to enable the public to navigate information critically and responsibly.

By highlighting the digital political phenomena that have occurred in Indonesia over the past few years, this research makes a new contribution to understanding political participation more broadly. Political participation is understood not only as electoral activities such as general elections or regional elections, but also as a form of citizen involvement in expressing opinions, shaping public opinion, and engaging in political discussions through social media. Phenomena such as the spread of symbols, viral hashtags, and digital mobilization carried out by or against political figures demonstrate that the space for participation has now expanded into the digital realm, which is spontaneous, open, and participatory.

With a contextual approach that highlights local dynamics and the public's use of digital platforms, this study enriches the literature on digital democracy, particularly in Indonesia. It also demonstrates that political participation in the digital era involves more informal actors, such as social media users, online communities, and political sympathizers, who play a role in shaping discourse and influencing public perception. These findings can serve as a foundation for understanding new forms of political participation that are evolving in line with advances in communication technology and culture.

Further research is needed to empirically test emerging patterns of political participation on social media, whether through surveys, in-depth interviews, or field case studies. Furthermore, it is crucial to develop new conceptual models that can explain the relationship between digital platform architecture, personalization algorithms, and emerging forms of digital political participation. Cross-platform and

cross-demographic comparative studies are also recommended to examine variations in digital political behavior across different socio-cultural contexts.

BIODATA

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