Online civic eengagement: Fostering citizen engagement through social media

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ABSTRACT
The Industrial Revolution 4.0, which makes the internet its backbone, has accelerated the process due to the Covid-19 pandemic which forced citizens to shift all their activities to the digital world, including the involvement of citizens in responding to public discourse. Citizens' public discourses that previously took place in real public spaces have now shifted to digital spaces, one of which is social media. To bridge these changes, a conceptualization of civic engagement is needed through a digital platform. The online citizen involvement was later referred to as online civic engagement, namely civic engagement activities specifically carried out by digital citizens involving several types of digital media, one of which is social media. This literature study provides a clearer picture of the forms of community interaction through social media that go beyond what is known as "slacktivism". When many democracies are faced with the problem of decreasing citizen participation in politics, social media comes with a new form of civic interaction with what is meant by online civic engagement.

Introduction

In the last decade, social media users in Indonesia have overgrown along with increased internet access. According to data released by the, We Are Social institution in its annual report entitled Digital 2021: Global Overview Reports, the number of social media users in Indonesia reaches 170 million out of the 202.6 million total population connected to the internet (Kemp, 2021). The time spent accessing social media is an average of 3 hours 14 minutes a day or almost 8 hours of human productive time. This data shows that social media has become a mainstream media platform connected to the nearest Indonesian cities. From interacting socially, and exchanging information, to selling online, it can be done with social media on the device.

Industrial revolution 4.0, which has made the internet network the backbone of industrial development, has drastically changed the way citizens communicate. The buzz of issues on social media by digital citizens provides a strong perception and perspective for citizens in assessing something in the social, religious, and political fields (Mulyono et al., 2021). Therefore, all citizens' activities on social media cannot be underestimated. Activities previously only considered communication to seek pleasure have changed and increased into complex contact.

On the other hand, we are faced with the problem of declining levels of participation and civic engagement, especially among the younger generation. The younger generation who are more

familiar with technology is often considered as the group of people who are least concerned with political issues, who often experience disconnection from their communities, which are not interested in political processes and issues, and have low levels of trust in politicians and are cynical about various political and governmental institutions (Hamid et al., 2015). It is in the hands of the youth that the progress and decline of a nation are guaranteed. Several studies have also shown that it is crucial for young people to be involved in community building, especially how youth leadership emphasizes the ability and importance of youth voices to be heard (Agostino & Visser, 2010, p. 90; Pancer et al., 2002).

Civic engagement is an interdisciplinary study involving the disciplines of political science, citizenship, psychology, anthropology, and others. However, conceptually civic engagement is one of the main concepts in community civic, emphasizing citizen involvement in various aspects of life (Darmawan et al., 2016). Its actions cover all activities, including political participation, social networking, association involvement, to newspaper reading activities (O'Connor, 2006; Putnam, 1993). Almost all of these activities are carried out in the real world or directly in front of citizens. In fact, with the industrial revolution 4.0, which made the internet the backbone of citizens' activities, many have changed and shifted to the digital world, especially social media, channeling their aspirations. In this regard, digital citizens' role in their social media involvement is becoming increasingly vital.

The digital citizen is defined by Mossberger, Tolbert, and McNeal as "those who use the Internet regularly and effectively" (Mossberger et al., 2008). Concerning Mossberger et al.'s opinion, anyone who regularly uses the internet in their daily life can be categorized as a digital citizen. The limitations set by Mossberger et al. regarding digital citizens are not limited to any one who engages in online behavior in their daily lives, both to obtain political information to fulfill their obligations as citizens and the use of technology in their work for economic purposes. Thus, quantitatively the number of digital citizens is the number of citizens who access the internet in their daily lives.

With so many digital citizens involved in many activities in the digital world, it is appropriate that theoretical development of the concept of civic engagement in the digital realm is needed. Because theoretically, studies on civic engagement have not directed many citizens to online forms of citizen engagement.

Social Media as New Media

The emergence of social media in the early 2000s has drastically changed the communication patterns of citizens in their daily lives. It is undeniable that the presence of social media can move social life to be more dynamic. Social media as a public entity has been popular in connecting citizens' aspirations through a virtual communication process linked to each other (Saepudin et al., 2018). Conceptually, social media is user-generated content utilizing Internet-based publishing technologies, distinct from traditional print and broadcast media. Social media can facilitate two-way communication that allows organizations to personalize content and engage with communities and society. Social media also offers various tools to connect people and a diverse range, such as social networking sites (Facebook and Twitter), photo sharing sites (Instagram and Flickr), and video sharing sites (Youtube and Vimeo) (Alber et al., 2015, p. 2; Terry, 2009).

As a new communication medium, social media has a variety of definitions. One of them was delivered by Carr and Hayes, who defined social media as "*Internet-based channels that allow users to interact opportunistically and selectively self-present, either in real-time or asynchronously, with both broad and narrow audiences who derive value from user-generated content and the perception of interaction with others*" (Carr & Hayes, 2015, p. 50). In this context, in Car and Hayes's view, social

media emphasizes the two-way communication between the communicant and the receiver, which can exchange messages simultaneously.

While a more straightforward concept of social media is presented by Lewis (2010, p. 2), who explains that social media is a label for digital technology that allows people to connect, interact, and produce different content. This concept emphasizes social media on the process of communication interaction, which is two-way communication and delivering messages by creating and sharing content on social media. A similar image is also conveyed by Shirky (2008), who calls social media a tool that "enhances our ability to share, to co-operate with each other, and to take collective action, all outside the framework of traditional institutions and organizations" (Shirky, 2008). Shirky's emphasis is on taking collective action, which means that social media can facilitate citizens, especially digital citizens, and collaborative activities such as fundraising, online petitions, and online civic engagement.

Social media's wide range of functions and influence has transformed it from just a communication tool to a "new media." New media is a term to describe the convergence of digital communication technologies that are computerized and connected to a network. New media is anything that can channel information (intermediaries) from sources of information to recipients of the data. New media has two main elements, namely digitization, and convergence. Internet is evidence of convergence because it combines several other media functions such as audio, video, and text (McQuail, 2010, p. 147).

New media refers to changes in media production, distribution, and use. Suppose conventional mass media, both print, and electronic media, are primarily determined by the editorial politics of the media kitchen, which is tiered with many editors. In that case, it is much influenced by the "will" of the media owner itself and can be framed according to the "order" of the investors overseeing it. New media comes more personal, freer, and almost without control, like conventional media.

Therefore McQuail (McQuail, 2010) calls new media the characteristics; *interactivity*, namely the interactive use of social media as indicated by the ratio of the user's response to the sender of the message; *social presence (sociability)*, namely the existence of individual personal contact between users caused by social media; *media richness*, where social media can bridge different frames of reference, reduce ambiguity, provide more cues, senses, and be more personal; *autonomy*, which is when users feel more capable and gain higher freedom in controlling the media with its content, and use; *playfulness*, social media can provide a lot of entertainment and fun; *privacy*, which is related to the facilities that the user can use in using the media and content according to their needs; and the last is *personalization* which emphasizes the content of the message in communication and its use (McQuail, 2010). Some examples of new forms of media are social media such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, TikTok, and several other social media currently being loved by the public.

Indeed, social media is part of mass media, but the two have pretty clear differences. McQuail (McQuail, 2010) mentions three reasons; *First*, the internet is not only concerned with the production and distribution of messages but also with processing, exchanging, and storing messages. *Second*, new media are private institutions like public communications and are regulated (or not) accordingly. *Third*, new media operations are usually unprofessional or bureaucratically held at the same level as the mass media. In media studies, many academics link the potential of social media to facilitate civil society's access to the public sphere. This view departs from Habermas's concept's long-standing political axiom called deliberative democracy. Discourse in the public sphere involves conversations about issues of public concern among empowered citizens as an essential and vital prerequisite for the functioning of democracy (Uldam & Vestergaard, 2015, p. 6).

The process of deliberative democracy in the digital world and the natural world has a fundamental difference in space in the process, although substantially, they have the same meaning. The difference is that the process of discussion and interaction is not done face-to-face. Deliberative democracy in the digital era occurs when citizens interact, communicate, exchange ideas, and give each other comments as a form of advice or criticism, which are conveyed through digital information channels (social media, websites, blogs, etc.) without limited time and space. The digital democracy model provides a new understanding that the aspirations of networking, building participation, and public involvement in development can occur more effectively and efficiently. The presence of digital media has become a new means of delivering government policies that are in line with the expectations and needs of citizens (Saepudin et al., 2018).

Civic Engagement: from Offline to Online

The term civic engagement was popularized by Robert D. Putnam in his book *Making Democracy Work* (Putnam, 1993). In his book, Putnam explains the importance of "social capital" as a vital element of a democratic society. The focus of Putnam's discussion is more on "engagement" than "civic" or "politics" (Ekman & Amnå, 2012, p. 284). Putnam defines social capital as "connections among individuals—social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them" (Putnam, 2001). In that sense, social capital is very closely related to civic virtue, which in the concept of citizenship in Indonesia is called citizenship virtue which emanates from the values of Pancasila, which includes active citizen involvement, equal/egalitarian relations, mutual trust, and tolerance, communal life, solidarity, and community spirit (Mulyono, 2017). Therefore, Putnam's discussion of civic engagement refers to activities that build social capital (Adler & Goggin, 2005, p. 239). This concept is in line with the opinion of Darmawan et al. (2016), which state that civic engagement has character elements such as civic skills, civic intelligence, and civic responsibility (Darmawan et al., 2016; Muhkam & Darmawan, 2018, p. 127).

Thomas Ehrlich conveyed a more precise definition of civic engagement. He stated: "Civic engagement has been defined as the process of believing that one can and should make a difference in enhancing his or her community" (Ehrlich, 2000, p. vi). In his definition, Ehrlich states that one of the most prominent characteristics of civic engagement is that someone can make a difference in improving their community. Ehrlich further explains that a combination of knowledge, skills, and values is needed to make a meaningful difference in improving the quality of life in the community, both through political and non-political processes (Ehrlich, 2000; Hylton, 2018). Ehrlich's definition provides a clear, albeit broad, perspective. The reference for its activities is not only limited to political involvement, although political activities can be part of partisan civic engagement.

The definition of civic engagement, which is quite popular in many kinds of literature today, is that conveyed by Adler and Goggin (Adler & Goggin, 2005), which explain: "Civic engagement describes how an active citizen participates in the life of a community to improve conditions for others or to help shape the community's future" (Adler & Goggin, 2005). Namely as the involvement of citizens both individually and collectively in social life based on skills, knowledge, values, motivation, and commitment to make changes to improve the community's quality of life. In their presentation, Adler and Goggin said there was no single agreed meaning in describing civic engagement. For this reason, Adler and Goggin classify the definition of civic engagement in several views: 1) Civic engagement as community service, 2) Civic engagement as collective action, 3) Civic engagement as political involvement, and 4) Civic engagement as social change (Adler & Goggin, 2005).

Advances in information technology, especially digital communication, have increased in the last few decades. The convergence of network structures and accessibility followed by advances in

hardware and software have enabled individuals to transform and fundamentally change how communication occurs in public life. Because changes in the way people communicate ultimately also change individual experiences in the social field, especially involvement or participation in civic life, both in how to do it and how to measure it (Gordon et al., 2013, p. 1).

The presence of new media, such as social media, requires a redefinition of citizen involvement, especially for young citizens. Civic engagement for young citizens is an unconventional form of participation that no longer uses traditional methods. The millennial generation no longer uses conventional ways of expressing ideas. The millennial generation is more comfortable using technology which will have a more significant impact. Because the millennial generation interprets political participation not only in democratic parties but in a broader social scope, such as making online petitions, criticizing the government through social media, or even fundraising movements for people who do not get justice, ways like this happen because of an educated and open-minded culture that is supported by technology and global trends. Because civic engagement is not a neutral concept but the interrelationships between individuals, communities, and the wider society.

The presence of this technology has formed a new awareness of the great potential of the new media. The forms of citizen involvement are no longer carried out conventionally, such as demonstrations, boycotts, channeling opinions in the mass media, etc., which require a lot of money and energy. A person only needs to use social media on the device in his hand to get involved in giving opinions or just to understand the issues that are being public discourse. Ultimately, these activities will lead to concrete actions that can be taken as good citizens. What must be done now is how to take advantage of advances in information technology to implement and facilitate the rights and obligations of citizens.

This starkly contrasts with the previous model of compliant citizenship based on one-way communication managed by the authorities (Bennett et al., 2011, p. 835). The younger generation has turned to a new form of social, civic engagement in the digital world. The younger generation, as "digital natives," are at the forefront of promoting participatory media in a new form of employment in public life (Jenkins, 2006; Palfrey & Gasser, 2008).

To bridge these changes, several academics have suggested the importance of the civic engagement process being carried out through online platforms such as interactive websites (Pasek et al., 2009; Raynes-Goldie & Walker, 2008), as well as social media (Bennett et al., 2011; Skoric et al., 2015; Valenzuela, 2013; Warren et al., 2014) because the new media has provided a new "participatory space" that is different from before. Especially after the emergence of social media, which has impacted various civic activities in the online realm, such as online participation in political expression and protest (Valenzuela, 2013).

Online citizen engagement activities are then referred to as online civic engagement, namely civic engagement activities that are specifically carried out by young people and involve digital media of several types (Cho et al., 2020, p. 7). Conceptually, there are similarities in the explanation of civic engagement both online and offline. The difference between the two is the result of the engagement process in the two domains. Initial findings from research conducted by Raynes-Goldie & Walker refer to online civic engagement as a facilitator of action, not a place for action, except for online petitions or writing open letters online. Online civic engagement sites are facilitators of offline activities that provide access to three keys to change: information, people, and measuring tools (Raynes-Goldie & Walker, 2008). So that online civic engagement can improve and empower the real world.

To further clarify the concept of online civic engagement, Gordon et al. have classified online civic engagement into three categories, namely: (1) *acquiring and processing information*, or obtaining and processing relevant information to formulate opinions on civic issues, (2) *voicing and*

debating opinions and beliefs, voicing and debating opinions and beliefs related to civic life in the community or the public, and (3) *taking action*, namely taking joint action and tension with social institutions such as political parties, governments, corporations, or community groups (Gordon et al., 2013). These three categories are the most likely intersections that result from the intersection of technology-mediated civic engagement presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1
The Main Categories of Online Civic Engagement (Source Gordon et al. 2013)
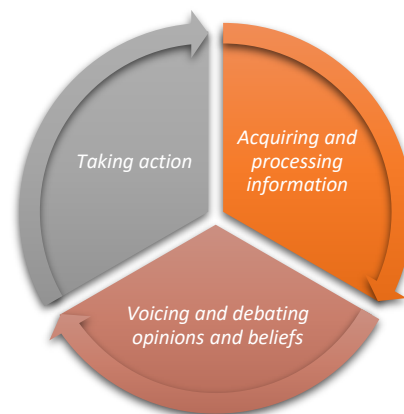
Like offline citizen engagement, online civic engagement also requires straightforward measuring tools in its activities in the digital space so that each activity can be categorized with certainty. However, it is recognized that until now, there is no established methodology to evaluate the effectiveness of online civic engagement, especially in the younger generation and other segments of the population (Raynes-Goldie & Walker, 2008). Nevertheless, several researchers have compiled a common thread for online civic engagement indicators, one of which is a study conducted by Brandtzaeg, Mensah, & Følstad, which made online civic engagement indicators include: 1) *Supportive practices*, namely individual participation and practice sharing online via easy-to-use social features; 2) *Deliberative practices*, or discursive practices, namely the process of weighing different options through discussion in which different opinions are represented; and 3) *Collaborative practices*, namely when youth create new ideas or solutions in collaboration to support, promote, and discuss social problems (Brandtzaeg et al., 2012, p. 65). Shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2
Civic Engagement Online Indicators

Digital Activism through Online Civic Engagement

The presence of social media can facilitate a new form of citizen engagement called online civic engagement. However, this new form of civic engagement is not without criticism. Many are skeptical about the role of social media in facilitating civic engagement. One is Malcom Gladwell (2010), who calls social media only to promote weak ties and low-risk activism or "slacktivism." Nugroho (2011, p. 80) also conveyed a similar opinion, who called activism on social media "click activism." "like" a post on social media or "resend" a link takes effort. Still, the action is felt hyperbolically as if they have done something significant and are already involved more broadly in authentic engagement. It is not surprising that the euphoria of using social media on democratic issues is considered not to pursue democracy but rather to pursue the "sensation of democracy" (Morissan, 2014, p. 54).

However, this skepticism immediately received a response that was no less optimistic, one of which was from Shirky (2011), who believed that social media was an essential means to promote social and political change. In his analysis in *Foreign Affairs* (Shirky, 2011), Shirky thinks that social media can catalyze significant political change.

An example in Indonesia is the case of collecting "Coins for Prieta," which occurred in 2008. The community collected these coins as a form of resistance to the "injustice" obtained by Prieta Mulya Sari against a lawsuit made by Omni International Hospital and had to pay compensation amounting to Rp. 204 million rupiahs. No less than 8600 Facebook users were involved in supporting Prieta (Detik.com, 2009a) until the wave of community support was unstoppable until Rp. 825 million, in the form of coins (Okezone.com, 2009). Ultimately, Prieta Mulya Sari was not found guilty in 2012 (Detik.com, 2012).

A phenomenal event was the feud between the KPK vs. the Police and the Attorney General's Office, popularly known as "Cicak vs. Buaya," in mid-2009. This incident involved the Head of the Criminal Investigation Unit, Susno Duaji, who felt that the KPK was tapping the KPK in the case of embezzling Century Bank funds handled by the Criminal Investigation Unit of the Police. At that time, two KPK leaders, Bibit Samad Riyanto and Chandra M Hamzah were arrested by the police on charges of being competent. The public responded with 1.3 million support from Facebook users (Detik.com, 2009b) until finally, the president formed a fact-finding team called Team 8. extortion that was suspected previously did not find strong evidence (Liputan6.com, 2009). In the end, the case against the KPK leaders, Bibit and Chandra, was terminated after receiving pioneering from the Attorney General's Office (BBC.com, 2010).

The following example is the student movement event known as the *#Gejayanmemanggil* action, which mobilized thousands of students in one place at the intersection of three streets of Gejayan, Yogyakarta, on Monday, September 23, 2019. The action, which was initiated by the Movement of the People's Alliance (Aliansi Rakyat Bergerak), called for a motion of no confidence in The House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia (DPR RI) and brought seven demands: 1) delaying the ratification of the Criminal Code Bill, 2) revising the new KPK Law, 3) prosecuting environmental destroyers, 4) Rejecting problematic articles in the Manpower Bill, 5) Reject the problematic articles of the Land Bill, 6) Pass the Bill on the Elimination of Sexual Violence, and 7) Don't silence activists. This action began with an online movement on social media with the hashtag (hash sign) *#Gejayanmemanggil,* which has been mentioned by more than 35,000 social media users (Fahmi, 2019). In the end, the government postponed ratifying four bills that were considered to be triggering polemics in the community: the Mineral and Coal Bill, the Correctional Bill, the Land Bill, and the Criminal Code Bill (Tempo. co, 2019).

These cases indicate that social media has triggered citizen involvement (online) in responding to public issues to become larger and eventually become movements and actions in the real world

(offline). Social media can be a catalyst that moves citizens, not only in the online space but also offline. This online movement is commonly known as digital activism, which Denning defines as "...the use of the Internet in support of an agenda or cause" (Denning, 2001, p. 15).

According to Denning, activism on the internet includes five modes of activity; a collection of information; publication of information; dialogue; coordinating actions; and lobbying decision-makers) (Denning, 2001). In digital activism, the internet is nothing more than a means to an end or a plan. Activities can include exploring and searching for information, posting materials, creating petitions, sending publications, to coordinating activities. Based on Denning's opinion, it is clear that online civic engagement through social media needs to have a place in social studies, especially citizenship studies, because citizens' activities have gradually shifted to the digital world.

Conclusion

Social media has become a phenomenon in the era of the industrial revolution 4.0. Its widespread use makes social media a new tool in realizing "digital democracy," where information spread on social media will affect creating strong public opinion and lead to collective action. Social media has also become a new means of facilitating citizen engagement and realizing a new form of civic engagement called online civic engagement.

Social media can connect citizens' aspirations through virtual communication that is linked to one another. In this context, social media has played a role in mobilizing individuals to conduct online civic engagement by enabling anyone to spread and support digital activism on various issues. The online civic engagement movement triggers a more significant action in honest (offline), which in the end, this online movement has an impact on changing perspectives and policies. With this great potential, it is time for academics to encourage civil society to carry out an online civic engagement movement as a new form of citizen participation in a democratic country.

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