

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

In recent years, social media has seen widespread use as a space for communication, socialization, and idea exchange across various topics & fields. Over half of the world's population uses social media, and in Indonesia, as much as 73% of internet users report regular access to social media platforms (Hirose, 2024). One field which is discussed on social media is politics, which has now become especially prevalent in light of developments and controversy surrounding the recently-elected Indonesian presidential pair and their policies. A particularly notable topic in political discussions on social media is the militarization of governmental entities through the legislation of the RUU TNI & RUU Polri bills.

The use of social media in discussing complex & controversial topics, such as those in politics, tend to result in polarization and an increased sense of animosity towards the perceived “other party” (Marchal, 2022). In addition to this, through a combination of factors such as recommender algorithms (Terren & Borge-Bravo, 2021; Brown et al., 2022) and the presence of inherent cognitive & social biases (Diaz-Diaz, San Miguel & Meloni, 2022), social media users also experience more exposure to information in line with their beliefs and other like-minded individuals than ideas and individuals opposing theirs. These factors may then lead to the formation of an echo chamber, which can be defined as a virtual environment where an individual’s beliefs & opinions are gradually reinforced and strengthened by information and interactions encountered by said individual (Cinelli et al., 2021). In the context of politics, echo chambers can also result in the polarization of public opinion (Nayla, 2023), exacerbating political conflict.

One additional factor to consider is that echo chambers in social media often form without the recognition of the individual users inhabiting them, due to a lack of awareness or knowledge on the existence of said phenomenon (Marin &

Copeland, 2024). This lack of awareness can lead to a cycle of self-reinforcing beliefs and opinions (Santos, 2020), as well as an illusion of mass support (Lackey, 2021). In minor cases, echo chamber inhabitation can lead to a closed-off mindset and a hesitance to accept alternative opinions (Suzuki & Yamamoto, 2021). In the context of politics, this can manifest as a difficulty to understand different perspectives of an argument, or a refusal to acknowledge the validity of other points of view. More serious cases can also lead to an extreme or radicalized worldview (Wolfowicz, Weisburd & Hasisi, 2023), such as political extremism. A preliminary questionnaire conducted during this study with a total of 56 respondents showed that 69.6% were not familiar with the term “echo chamber” and 73.2% stated they had never encountered information regarding echo chambers prior to the survey. Though 57.1% of respondents feel unaffected by them, when presented with the *Makan Bergizi Gratis* program as a case study, 60.7% of respondents are under the impression that their opinion is supported by the majority of social media users, despite opinions being split relatively evenly amongst respondents of the study (with 37.5% of respondents supporting the cause, 21.4% being against it, and 41.1% remaining neutral).

From these points and the abovementioned pre-questionnaire data, it is apparent that the majority of social media users, though unaware of the echo chamber phenomenon, have experienced its effects to a certain extent. Furthermore, at the time of this study, there are few media focusing on promoting information diversity & political discussion as a method of exiting echo chambers, as well as information on political echo chambers in general. Most currently existing media are articles, such as one written by the Ministry of Finance (Kemenkeu), with a few visual media originating from personal blogs. One standout medium exists in the form of the Instagram account *@theconversationalist*, which focuses on promoting open-minded and flexible approaches to political discussion as a way to mitigate the echo chamber effect on individuals. With this information, the author proposes a solution in the form of a social campaign to dissuade social media users from inhabiting political echo chambers by promoting active diversification of opinions and information regarding politics and proactive seeking of alternate viewpoints.

1.2 Key Issues

Based on the points mentioned in the background, the existing issues in this final project are as follows:

1. The use of social media as a space for political information and opinion exchange has resulted in the creation of political echo chambers.
2. Unsupervised inhabitation of a political echo chamber can lead to the development of a narrow mindset regarding political stances, political polarization, as well as radicalism and/or political extremism
3. There is a lack of media promoting information diversity as a way to mitigate the echo chamber effect in social media, especially in politics.

Considering these issues as a design problem, the following problem statement can be concluded:

How would one design a social campaign on political echo chambers in social media?

1.3 Final Project Scope

The scope of this final project's output is a social campaign using social media as its main output, with various supporting media to aid in reach and accessibility. The target audience for this final project is teenagers of all genders, located in the Jabodetabek area, within SES B, aged 20-24 years old, with high social media use in their day-to-day lives, and exposure to politics through social media. The content presented in the final output of this project covers the definition and characteristics of political echo chambers on social media, as well as how to mitigate their effects, and the mental framework to adopt when prioritizing information diversity in political discussions.

1.4 Final Project Objective

The objective of this final project is to design a campaign on political echo chambers in social media, in order to promote information diversity, proactive seeking of alternate viewpoints in political discussions, and prevent the risks associated with inhabiting echo chambers.

1.5 Final Project Benefits

Regarding the topic of this final project, the author expects it to yield the following benefits:

1. Theoretical Benefits:

Through the topics reviewed in the creation of this project, the author hopes to provide deeper insight into the mechanics of echo chambers, including their creation and inhabitation. The author also hopes this project will help reduce political radicalization and extremism in individuals created through the participation of echo chambers.

2. Practical Benefits:

It is hoped that this project will help raise public awareness among social media users on political echo chambers and their potential effects, why it matters, and persuade them to take proactive measures to exit their political echo chambers and seek out alternate viewpoints. This project is also hoped to promote critical thinking, information diversity, and improved tolerance within political discussions on social media. Lastly, the author hopes to contribute this piece of academic writing to Universitas Multimedia Nusantara, to be used for future reference by researchers and/or students.

