



Social Media as a Negative Source of Political News in a Polarized Society? Indonesian and Filipino Students' Perception

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Abstract: The polarized society due to political elections in Indonesia and the Philippines is inseparable from many aspects. This study aims to elaborate the perception of Indonesian and Filipino students of social media as a political news source in a polarized society during the Covid-19 pandemic. This study uses a qualitative method. The result of this study shows that Indonesian and Filipino students used social media as a reference news source. For Indonesian students, Instagram became the most influential social media, whilst for the Filipino students, Facebook was the most influential social media. Indonesian students negatively perceived social media as a political news source due to the power of social media to increase or decrease polarization, whereas Filipino students have a reversed point of view. The positive perception of media is related to the ability of social media to give the knowledge about the political actors. According to Indonesian and Filipino students, political polarization in society occurs and continues because it is caused by fanaticism, group influence and the media. This research provides new insights to the public about how social media can affect social conditions concerning political contestation, and provides insight to political contestants about the social media usage as a source of political news among the younger generation.

Abstrak: Polarisasi masyarakat akibat politik pemilu di Indonesia dan Filipina tidak terlepas dari banyak aspek. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengelaborasi persepsi mahasiswa Indonesia dan Filipina terhadap media sosial sebagai sumber berita politik dalam masyarakat yang terpolarisasi selama pandemi Covid-19. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa mahasiswa Indonesia dan Filipina menggunakan media sosial sebagai referensi sumber berita. Bagi mahasiswa Indonesia, Instagram menjadi media sosial yang paling berpengaruh, sedangkan bagi mahasiswa Filipina, Facebook menjadi media sosial yang paling berpengaruh. Mahasiswa Indonesia memandang negatif media sosial sebagai sumber berita politik karena kekuatan media baru untuk menambah atau mengurangi polarisasi, sedangkan mahasiswa Filipina memiliki sudut pandang yang terbalik. Persepsi positif media terkait dengan kemampuan media sosial untuk memberikan pengetahuan tentang aktor politik. Menurut mahasiswa Indonesia dan Filipina, polarisasi politik di masyarakat terjadi dan terus berlanjut karena disebabkan oleh fanatisme, pengaruh kelompok dan media. Penelitian ini memberikan wawasan baru kepada masyarakat tentang bagaimana media sosial dapat mempengaruhi kondisi sosial mengenai kontestasi politik, dan memberikan wawasan kepada kontestan politik tentang penggunaan media baru sebagai sumber berita politik di kalangan generasi muda.

INTRODUCTION

In a democratic system, citizen participation has a crucial role in the political process because sovereignty is in the people's hands (Peters, 2016). In a democratic system, the public could evaluate, feel, and elect the party they believe, to fulfill their aspiration (McNair, 2011). For the political party, winning the election is the main agenda in every contestation. The party will use certain strategies, and work through individuals, institutions, or party cadres.

Political parties construct the lines of political competition by emphasizing some issues and deemphasizing others (Neundorf & Adams, 2018). The efforts on the election and the differences in strategies and goals of the political parties have become an embryo, and raises to extreme polarization and political cleavage. Voters' support quickly formed at the polar position, especially due to the themes of political campaigns by the political parties which are in diametral positions.

Polarization is a process whereby the normal multiplicity of differences in a society increasingly align along a single dimension and people increasingly perceive and describe politics and society in term of "us" versus "them" (McCoy et al., 2018). The election has become a political event that raises political polarization or a polarized society. This situation basically grows in most countries with a democratic system (Arbatli & Rosenberg, 2021; Down & Han, 2021; Huang & Kuo, 2022), especially the countries that have many political parties, including Indonesia and the Philippines. Social media has an important role in forming the polarization (Kubin & von Sikorski, 2021).

Indonesia and the Philippines have similar political and social situations. Indonesia is a republic democratic country, and the sovereignty of the country is on the people's hands. Indonesia also adopts the presidential system with the president as the head of state and government (Aziz, 2016). The Philippines, which is also a republic country. The Philippines government adopts a presidential system, representative democracy, and the Philippines president as the head of state and government in a multi-party system.

The polarization due to democracy events in Indonesia and the Philippines is also similar. Indonesia is in an extreme polarization in every national and local elections, and it had become very extreme at the presidential election in 2014 which had 2 candidates, Joko Widodo and Prabowo Subianto (Rianto, 2019). In 2017, Jakarta local election was one of the most polarized local election. The distribution of the ideological maps shows that voters are generally divided on political secularism and economic dimension. Anies-Sandiaga's voters tend to support Islamist sectarian, while Ahok-Djarot's are the double-minority (Afrimadona, 2021). The polarization meets the momentum at this election which resulted a massive action on November 4 and December 2, 2016. This group called themselves, Aksi Bela Islam 411 and Aksi Bela Islam 212. The political conflict in the Jakarta election has a similar pattern to the national situation. The political division between Islamist versus nationalist was getting stronger (Warburton, 2020).

Polarizing tendencies also occur in The Philippines. In 2022 election, Ferdinand Bongbong Romualdez Marcos Jr or Bongbong Marcos, won the election with Sara Duterte. Bongbong is the son of former President Ferdinand Marcos who is known as a dictator. Sara Duterte, Bongbong's vice president is the daughter of President Duterte who was the Philippines' president from June 30, 2016-2022. He was the 17th Philippines president. Sara on May 9 2022, underlined the polarization and the strong influence of the political dynasty in the Philippines power distribution (Haryanto, 2022).

It was a deal – rumored to have been brokered at the exclusive island resort of Balesin – that set the course of the Philippines election. The children of the two country's most powerful families agreed to join forces: dictator's son Ferdinand Marcos, Jr would run to be president in alliance with Sara Duterte, the tough-talking daughter of the populist incumbent, Rodrigo Duterte (Guardian, 2022). The explosions at the voting places in Maguindanao Province were the deadliest in the Philippines. It was located in Datu Unsay City, Sunday evening (08/05/2022), and 9 were injured. It was followed by an explosion in Shariff Aguak City, where 3 security officers were injured on Monday (09/05/2022) during the election. These was the excess of political polarization (Shalimar, 2022).

Social media contributed to polarization in both countries during elections (Gunawan & Ratmono, 2018; Kubin & von Sikorski, 2021). It is mainly due to the characteristics of the social media. This polarization happened is because of two kind of things, the first is user-generated content (UGC) in new media has encourage a wider participation among users. UGC make it possible for all the user to generate their own message (Lister et al., 2009) therefore encourage

the broad participation in social media. The active participation of social media is experiencing radicalization (Rianto, 2016). Second, the trend of using social media in Indonesia and The Philippines as a medium for seeking and sharing political information. For example Indikator Survey Indonesia, on January 21, conducted a national survey on the youth's voice on social and political issues. The result shows that the youth were familiar with the online media and social media. They actively commented and shared political information on social media. It indicated that the youth were actively involved in political issues online. The awareness to know the political situation grows because they consider that politics will affect their life, directly or indirectly.

Social media usage in both countries is also increasingly widespread. The data from We Are Social shows that internet users in the Philippines are 68% of the population, or 76.01 million people. They use approximately 10 hours and 27 minutes a day to access digital media. 83.7% use the internet to find information. Based on the data published by *Meta*, *Facebook* has 80,30 million diusers in the Philippines, and *Facebook* restricts the use of its platform to people aged 13 and above, so it's worth highlighting that 93.5 percent of the eligible audience in the Philippines uses *Facebook* (Kemp, 2023). In Indonesia, internet users are 73.7% of the population, or 204.7 million people, dominated by the youth or millennials. They use approx. 8 hours 36 minutes a day to access online media. The youth of Indonesia and the Philippines are active social media users. They use social media as a source of information, especially political information.

The widespread use of social media and the internet among young people in these two countries, clearly influences their perception of political reality. Perception is

a uniquely individual experience. The Britannica Dictionary stated that perception is the way you think about or understand someone or something, the ability to understand or notice something easily, the way that you notice or understand something using one of your senses (Dictionary, 2023). The main task of human perception is to amplify and strengthen sensory inputs to be able to perceive, orientate, and act very quickly, specifically, and efficiently (Carbon, 2014). In this case, social media has played an important role in delivering news content, especially political news, and social media users are exposed to constant news flow. *Facebook* users, for instance, are exposed to a constant flow of news content or information shared by others from their online network, and this will influence their perception of things. Abundant studies have examined individual's bias perception of new content using hostile media effect (HME), which posits that individuals who are highly involved in a contentious issue evaluate neutral news content on that issue as biased against their positions (Gunther et al., 2016). Other studies regarding perception and social media resulted that social networks have also become one of the most popular ways of people to socialize, connect with friends and family, purchase items and gather relevant information about current and political topics and views (Vranešević et al., 2019). The use of social media influences political knowledge by mediating online discussion over different social media platforms (Intyaswati et al., 2021), and the students' perceptions that converge the role of social media was significant, effective, and efficient, and were used as a means of socializing the 2019 presidential election so the students participated positively in determining their political choices (Setiawan et al., 2019).

It is different from the previous studies, this study aims at exploring the perception of Indonesian and the Philippines students of the online media including social media as the source of political information in a polarized society during the Covid-19 Pandemic, and their perception of social media as an effective new media to influence the voters, especially the younger generation. By conducting a comparative study between two countries, this research is expected to contribute to research on user perceptions of social media as a source of political news that has not received much attention among researchers.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach and descriptive type. A qualitative-research is a focus of attention with a variety of methods, which include interpretive and naturalistic approaches to the subject of the study in their natural context, seeing to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in term of the meaning that humans or researcher attached to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2009).

Data collection techniques are observation, interview, and literature review. The observation was conducted in the class of Bachelor of Arts in Communication Department, Mariano Marcos State University Philippines and Communication Department Social and Political Sciences Faculty Universitas Muhammadiyah Prof. Dr. Hamka Indonesia exchange program. Student observation is carried out online by the teachers during the exchange process. The teachers asked several issues about the conditions of society in the two countries, the perceived political conditions, and how they use online media including social media as a source of political news. The interviews were also conducted personally

with some outspoken students from both universities representing the youth of both countries. Observations were made on 14 informants, 7 of the informants are students of Communication Science Social and Political Sciences Faculty of Uhamka Indonesia (5 males and 2 females), and the other 7 students are from Bachelor of Arts in Communication, Mariano Marcos State University Philippines (4 males and 3 females). In this study, every informant was given the same questions. All the informants are active students from the 1st – 4th year, with the age range of 18-24 years old. The informants in this study were chosen due to some criteria, and the goal of the study is to explore the use of social media as a political news source.

The data analysis uses the Miles et.al. model (Miles et al., 2018), namely reduction of the data, presentation of the data, and conclusion. Data reduction is the process of data sorting, simplification, abstraction, and raw data transformation from the field notes. Presentation of the data is drafting the information until the data give the chance to a conclusion and action taking. And the conclusion is when the researcher gets the conclusion (Monica & Fitriawati, 2020).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Social Media as a Political News Source

Political events always make news for the media. Mitchel U. Charnley and James M. Neal (Wamoi, 2022) said that news is a report of an incident, opinion, trend, situation, condition, important interpretation, interesting and have to spread quickly. News refers to time, what's new, the opposites of old, and means as something new, and warm (Kurniasari, 2019). Based on this definition, political news is the report of a political event or related matters with the forms,

management, development, and distribution of power in the society that has the power to manage the human relationship in a society of a country. Political news often appears because it becomes something that is widely discussed by all member of society, including the youth (Firdaus et al., 2022).

In the communication technology era which produces internet-based media such as new media and social media, political events could never be ignored by the media, and media cannot ignore the political communication process. Both need each other. Multimedia aspects or technology become a suitable tool to spread the information, including political news. The technology is embodied in a new medium called new media.

New media becomes the base of the spread of political information in the multimedia era, especially in the Covid-19 pandemic situation. The increase of online media use as a tool to gather information including political information is one of the change due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The behavior changes due to the government policy to optimize the activities through the online media, and the advantage of new media that is more convenient for the people, swipes the printed and broadcast media. Previously, people use printed and broadcast media as information source, but now they have been replaced by online media. The habit of people to seek information during the Covid-19 pandemic was different from one to another. The media used by the public to obtain information was very diverse. Social media is the most widely used. But unfortunately, the level of trust in information from social media is very low. Television is the most trusted medium (Rianto et al., 2023).

Researcher found that all the youth at this research from Indonesia and the Philippines students use social media to get information of political incidents in their

countries. All of Indonesian students use social media as a political information source. The most interesting social media for Indonesian students as a political news source is Instagram. For Indonesian students, Instagram is the most interesting and effective in giving information, therefore it makes them interested in political issues because of its easy use and appearance.

The second and third favorite social media platforms are Facebook and Twitter. According to Indonesian students involved in this study, Facebook and Twitter are the most interesting social media as political news source after the Instagram. And the least favorite source are trustable online news portals such as *Detik.com*, *Kompas.com*, *CNN.com*, *Tempo.co*, *Tirto.id* and other online news portals that have good reputation. Online news portals are their last choice as a political information source.

Television is still an alternative for the Indonesian students to get political information. The students who use television as a political news source explain that sometimes they still doubt the accuracy of the online media. In this study, radio and printed media are not considered as the source of political news.

In the Philippines, the use of the social media as a political news source is similar to Indonesia. All the youth in this study who are the students of Bachelor of Art Mariano Marcos State University use new media especially social media as a political news source in their country. In their opinion, the most interesting social media as political news source is Facebook. Facebook is considered as the most interesting, informative, and influencing social media with its easy use and appearance. On the second place are Twitter, Tiktok and official news websites.

For the Filipino students, new media and social media give convenience to gather political information, but almost all of them said that it is hard to believe the political news from the online media. Therefore, the Philippines students often verify political news through broadcast or printed media. In their opinion, fact verification is something the citizen should do to determine the credibility and validity of the information.

“I get all the information about the election and political news on the TV, and social media. But this doesn't mean I should believe what I see right away. Verifying information is a must and it is our job as citizens to determine the credibility of the information being presented in order to ensure its validity (Aaron Zandler Guillermo, Student of MMSU).”

For Indonesian and Filipino students, social media give them a new point of view related to the way people give meaning of information flow in the globalization era, especially political incidents. Social media give the information that has become a basic need for the modern people, although the truth and accuracy still need to be verified. For the students, conventional media have better accuracy level compared to online media including social media, because the conventional media follow a set of law to regulate the information flow.

Social media is different from the conventional media. Social media not only eliminates gatekeepers in conventional media, but also creates broad autonomy for users to produce content (Rianto, 2019). Consequently, in social media there are some terminology such as “hoaxes” “fake news”, “false news”, and so on. And the social media is in the online field (Junaedi, 2011).

The young generation nowadays are familiar with the social media and online media. They actively comment on political news and share them. It shows that the youth are involved with the political issues online. The awareness of the political situation appears because they consider that politics will affect their lives, directly or indirectly (Silvianto, 2021).

Politicians use Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook as a media to increase the relation with the public and as a tool to introduce the party to the public and to give information to the public about their activity (Rizqia, 2021). Because the social media users in Indonesia and the Philippines are getting larger, the political intention is involved. The young generation found new things of politics on social media, not only from the news portal or from the politician.

Perception of Social Media as a Political News Source

Perception can be understood as the comprehension and processing of sensory information (i.e. in the world around us) (Hautekiet et al., 2023). And according to Claus-Cristian Carbon, sensory perception is often the most striking proof of something factual – when we perceive something, we interpret and take it as “objective”, “real” (Carbon, 2014). In this study, researcher wants to know the perception or interpretation – giving meaning – to a sensation or sensory stimulus to Indonesian and the Philippines students, regarding to the social media that they use daily as a source of political news in a polarized society with political events in Indonesia and the Philippines during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Giving meaning (perception) to social media as a source of political news for Indonesian and Filipino students does not only form the basis of data. Moreover, a number of information on political events

that they obtain from the environment or social media is absorbed by their senses (natural sensations), whilst the other part is obtained and based on the processing of the person's memory or memory which is reprocessed based on the their past experience. Past experience (memory) that shapes Indonesian and Filipino students' perceptions of social media as a source of political news in this study is the phenomenon of general election contestation (election) that has taken place in their respective countries.

In conditions of polarization or political cleavage, society as voters who contribute to political participation is divided into two opposing poles over the issue of religious identity, nationalism or ideology. Elections become political events that give rise to the phenomenon of political polarization or polarized society. This situation basically grows in most democratic systems, especially for countries that implement multiparty systems, including Indonesia and the Philippines.

Indonesian and Philippines students in this study believe that currently polarized society or what is happening in their countries are due to previous election contestations. Ryand Angelo G. Ugalde, MMSU Student, Philippines, said, “A democratic country like the Philippines is prone to opinions and beliefs that differ, his past election was one of the most divisive, given the presence of the digital media which can be easily used to voice out opinions which can be detrimental to other parties”. That a democratic country like the Philippines is vulnerable to different opinions and beliefs, and the election that just ended in May 2022 was the most divisive election or created societal polarization in the Philippines.

Filipino students also revealed that the 2022 Election was a political contest that was quite extreme. It caused people to

go against what they believed in, and it also affected the relations of people in the Philippines. Even so, all Filipino students said that although the May, 2022 elections were not perfect, at least the elections went well, and it was time for the people to respect the election results, continue to participate and continue to call for movements and opinions as part of democratic practice. All Filipino informant participants in this study were able to respect the democratic process in their country, even though many young Filipinos feel dissatisfied with the results of election decisions.

Likewise, Muhammad Bayuputra Danizar, as an Indonesian UHAMKA student, said,

"The 2014 and 2019 elections in Indonesia were two of the election contestation events that polarized society to a degree that is quite worrying to this day. The contestation of the two politicians that occurred in the election caused the community to split into opposite and made the community argue opposite arguments regarding the figures they supported. If this happens continuously, it will make the political condition unhealthy."

The 2019 elections in Indonesia have succeeded in placing elected people to occupy executive and legislative positions for the following five years. For Indonesian students, even though the phenomenon of polarized society still exists, the 2019 election is already better than the previous one, viewed from the use of technology. Technological advances in the 2019 election have helped the public who is politically literate, or opened up the insights of the younger generation regarding the political map and political climate in Indonesia, and have even been able to persuade the public to exercise their right to vote in elections, including the

younger generation who are of productive age. According to Worldometers in 2019 (Worldometer, 2023) as many as 31% of the population in Indonesia in 2019 are the millennial generation and they dominate the population in Indonesia. Millennials think that technology is an inseparable part of their lifestyle. As a result, the majority of the younger generation use technology to make their lives easier, such as finding political news sources via the Internet or social media. Based on data from the Indonesian General Elections Commission (KPU) in 2019, the number of millennial voters has reached 70-80 millions out of 193 millions voters, which means that 35-40% of millennial voters already have power and they have a major influence on the results of the upcoming election. Millennials are not apathetic towards politics. Having a sense of responsibility as a good citizen is the basis for the millennial generation to participate in politics.

Being in an unforgettable political event, Indonesian students in this study also revealed that the 2019 elections in Indonesia were considered complicated or full of polemics (drama), and even recorded a dark history when viewed from the series of events that occurred during the implementation, both during the pre-election and post-election. In every election process, the mass media including online media never stop disseminating information related to political events that occurred to the wider community.

Indonesia and the Philippines have similarities in terms of social conditions and political situations. For the two countries, the phenomenon of political polarization due to differences in political choices did not fade away after the election was over. On the contrary, it grew stronger. The phenomenon of political polarization in a democracy does not fade away and it seems difficult to disappear because the phenomenon of political strife due to

differences in choices still occurs and is increasingly widespread. According to Indonesian and Filipino students, political polarization in society occurs and continues because it is caused by fanaticism, group influence and the media.

Fanaticism

Fanaticism itself is defined as a fanatical understanding. Fanaticism is excessive and irrational enthusiasm for something that exists, or devotion to a theory, belief, or line of action that determines a very emotional attitude and its mission knows practically no boundaries. The perpetrators of fanaticism vary from small children to adults, males or females, with high or low education both in groups and individually (Prakoso, 2013). Fanaticism is often one of the things that causes the polarization of society to occur and persist due to political events.

Group Influence (Group Cohesivity)

Polarization in a particular group causes a tendency towards extreme positions. Irving Janis called it Groupthink, which is a decision-making process that occurs in very cohesive groups, where members try to maintain group consensus so that their critical abilities are no longer effective. A group will feel confident with the group of their choice, this belief is followed by self-righteousness.

The Media

According to Harsano Suwardi (Hamad, 2004), one of the main characteristics of political news itself is the formation of public opinion. By becoming a political communication channel, the media can contribute to the formation of public opinion to act as a political agent. The influence of the media, which has the character of "leading" opinion, greatly

influences society in responding to existing political figures, especially those affiliated with certain parties. Continuous coverage on online media and constant information on social media has built a construction of political events.

In this study, a number of Indonesian and Filipino students' perceptions were found regarding social media as a source of political news. First, Indonesian students tend to have a negative perception of social media as a source of political news related to the ability of social media to strengthen or reduce social polarization. Indonesian students stated that social media as a source of political news could strengthen the existing polarization in society. Meanwhile, Filipino students tend to have a positive perception of social media as a source of political news related to the ability of social media to strengthen or reduce social polarization. Filipino students further state that social media as a source of political news is able to reduce the existing polarization in society. According to the young generation of Indonesia in this study, namely FISIP UHAMKA students, Indonesia had a critical and skeptical understanding of new media as a source of political news. Even though new media is the main choice as a reference source for political news, they understand and believe that the mass media, including online media, are not completely neutral in reporting, especially regarding information about political events. The media is considered not entirely objective as a source of political news due to the convergence or consolidation of the media and the competence of media ownership (concentration of ownership) as a mass media phenomenon that occurs in Indonesia. On the other hand, the young Filipino generation in this study, MMSU students, have a more open understanding of social media as a source of political news.

MMSU students, Philippines, put more emphasis on efforts to exploit or have the advantages of social media. For MMSU Students, social media which is their main choice as a source of reference for political news has influence and power in changing the minds and decisions of other people (the public) to choose wisely the information related to political events that they obtain, hence in this case the polarization of society due to political events can be reduced.

Filipino students revealed that mass media, including new media or specifically social media, would not develop properly or would not benefit from being used incorrectly and irresponsibly, because this would have an impact on the quality of society itself. According to their opinion, the mass media in a country reflects a social system in which relations between individuals and existing institutions are regulated. The relationship between the mass media and society is *respirok* (mutual influence). The state creates a mass media system, then this system will modify the state's society.

Second, Indonesian and Filipino students tend to have positive and negative perceptions of social media as a source of political news related to the ability of social media to provide good political insights for the younger generation. Negative perceptions arise from Indonesian and Filipino students towards social media as a source of political news related to the ability of social media to provide good political insights for the younger generation, because unlike conventional media, social media does not necessarily follow legal rules covering every flow of information it displays. So it's no wonder if the terms "hoax", "fake news", "false news" and others appear in the social media for any information conveyed, including political news. Social media as part of new media does provide a lot various

information, which is a primary need for modern people, but the accuracy and truth of the information requires further verification. Indonesian students also revealed that there is no mass media, including social media that is neutral in its political reporting. Social media and actors including political actors who disseminate information or political news are more in the direction of driving public opinion or public insight that they want to instill in accordance with their interests.

Positive perceptions arise from Indonesian and Filipino students towards social media as a source of political news related to the ability of social media to provide good political insights for the younger generation because social media is able to offer interactivity, de-massification, and asynchronous for active and participating young generations on political issues. Social media has a good ability to actualize political events, in a more interactive method. It also provides abundant information from various sources, from experts or professionals, as well as easy access for anyone, anytime, anywhere. Thus, social media as a source of political news is able to provide political insights that is good for young generation.

Third, Indonesian and Filipino students tend to have positive perception on social media as a source of political news related to the ability of social media to provide sufficient knowledge about political actors. Participants in this study revealed that social media as a source of political news is capable of imparting knowledge about political actors to the younger generation. The nature of interactivity in social media makes political actors present and develop themselves through political communication that is informed to the public. Therefore, social media plays a very important role in providing knowledge about political actors, especially if its users are the younger

generation who are enthusiastic about bringing positive changes, and are active in participating in political issues.

Politically, social media has proven its role in various political activities. Today's political actors are also starting to use cyberspace as a vehicle for carrying out political campaigns and building their character or image. In the future, political campaigns will play in cyberspace (Indrawan, 2019). Social media can be a meeting place for stakeholders in politics that are separated by space and time. These stakeholders, such as rulers, officials, politicians, parties, other political groups, and of course also the community. Social media enables cyber democracy to occur (Lim, 2017; Nugroho & Syarief, 2012), namely where social media can be used to support political communication activities. For example, rulers who want to convey public policy, politicians or parties who want to build certain image or campaign for general elections, and people who want to criticize a policy or rule made by the authorities. All of these interactions are carried out in cyberspace.

CONCLUSION

Both Indonesian and Filipino students use social media as a source of political news. In Indonesia, *Instagram* is the most popular new media and is considered the most interesting, informative, and influential media in providing good information. The user-friendly features and attractive appearance it provides, grow the younger generation's interest in political issues. In the Philippines, students tend to choose *Facebook*.

For Indonesian and Filipino students, social media presents a new way of viewing or consuming political news, although the accuracy and correctness of the news requires further verification. It is different from conventional media who

obey legal rules that cover every flow of information that is displayed. Therefore, it is not surprising that the term "hoax", "fake news", "false news" appears in the new media as a source of political news. Indonesian and Filipino students still rely on conventional media to crosscheck the accuracy and truth of news they read in online media. For them, conventional media has a good degree of accuracy and truthfulness of political news compared to online media.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, students had a series of past experiences in memory and stimulus space in the form of increasing digital access during the pandemic and elections which gave rise to the phenomenon of societal polarization. The experience and stimulus from this phenomenon present the perceptions of Indonesian and Filipino students are as follows. First, Indonesian students tend to have a negative perception of social media as a source of political news, especially in terms of the ability of social media to strengthen or reduce polarization in society. Furthermore, Indonesian students state that social media as a source of political news can strengthen polarization in society. Filipino students tend to have positive perceptions. They state that social media as a source of political news can reduce polarization in society. Second, Indonesian and Filipino students tend to have positive and negative perceptions of social media as a source of political news related to the ability of social media to provide good political insights for the younger generation. Third, they tend to have a positive perception of social media as a source of political news related to the ability of social media to provide sufficient knowledge about political actors.

This research suggests the younger generation be wiser in using social media as a source of political news. Political events which appear on online media,

including social media, should be reviewed again and compared to the information from conventional media. And politicians who use online media especially social media as a tool to disseminate information should be more careful because the

implications of information on social media will affect the perception of the young generation about political incidents, especially when the situation in society is already polarized.

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