

## Research Article

# Radicalism in the Digital Era: The Role of Digital Literacy in Preventing Propaganda in Indonesia

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**ORCID**Isabella: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6151-5081>**Abstract.**

Radicalism has become a serious threat in Indonesia, especially through the spreading of extreme ideologies through social media and online platforms. This threat is increasingly pervasive with the rise of radical propaganda, which can be easily accessed by the public, especially through Twitter. Therefore, this research has the main objective, namely identifying the urgency of the threat of radicalism propaganda in cyberspace and analyzing the important role of digital literacy as an effective prevention tool. The thematic analysis method is used to examine radical content spread on Twitter, using the Nvivo 12 Plus tool to support the data analysis process. The findings of this research highlight the importance of increasing digital literacy in society as a strategic step in facing the growing threat of radicalism. Digital literacy has an important role in equipping individuals with the ability to identify, analyze, and counter harmful content and actively participate in reporting such threats to the authorities. In this case, the government's active support in holding digital literacy education programs and awareness campaigns is crucial. We can create a safer and smarter digital environment with close cooperation between all parties.

**Keywords:** radicalism, digital literacy, propaganda, social media

## 1. Introduction

Radicalism is a global phenomenon that has colored the history of many countries, including Indonesia [1], [2]. This phenomenon can be defined as extreme views or actions that conflict with democratic values and threaten the peace and stability of a country [3]. In the Indonesian context, the danger of radicalism has emerged in various forms, from religious radicalism to political radicalism, and has deep roots in the history of this country [4], [5]. The importance of understanding and dealing with the dangers of radicalism in Indonesia must be addressed. Its long and complex history shows that this is not a new problem but also reflects the need for cooperation between governments, civil society, and international institutions.

Social media has become a fertile field for spreading disturbing propaganda, such as issues related to radicalism [6]. Various groups and parties with certain agendas

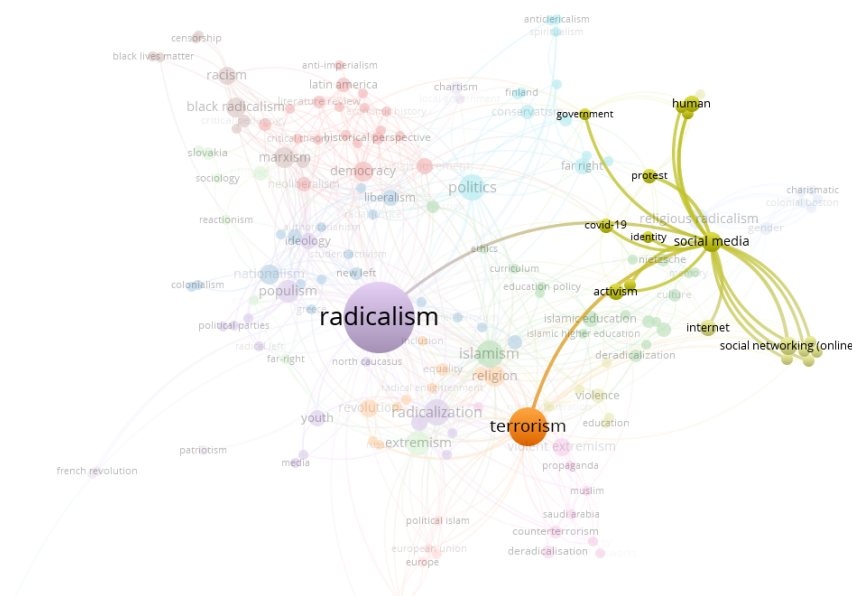
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use social media platforms to influence public opinion, spread false information, and strengthen narratives that suit their interests [7], [8]. In this environment, society is exposed to various forms of propaganda that can undermine healthy understanding, fuel social tensions, and divide society. To overcome this problem, individuals need to develop strong and critical digital literacy [9], [10]. The ability to differentiate legitimate information from propaganda and analyze information sources is an invaluable skill in this digital era [11], [12].



**Figure 1:** Network Visualization VOSviewer.

Based on the figure above, it shows that there are several color clusters, namely purple, orange and yellow, which are related to radicalism, terrorism and Social Media. Each of these clusters currently has connectivity with existing keywords. This mapping is done to get a detailed and categorized picture of the network, while the cluster results are a collection of journals that have been accused in the Scopus database. The largest and widest circle represents the area where the most research is done, while the opposite or smaller circle represents the area where the least research is done. Each existing keyword relationship with the main theme can be supplemented with detail-oriented supporting points. If you look at the image above, you will see that the largest cluster is in the purple cluster with the main keyword radicalism and is related or followed by terrorism and social media.

Digital literacy has a crucial urgency in overcoming the spread of propaganda on social media [13]–[15]. In an era where information can be easily produced and disseminated, individuals’ ability to identify, criticize, and filter the information they encounter on social media is key in preventing the spread of harmful propaganda [16], [17]. Without

digital literacy, social media users are vulnerable to becoming victims of propaganda aimed at influencing their views and behavior, and can even endanger social and political stability [13], [18]. Digital literacy also allows society to actively participate in overcoming propaganda [19]. Individuals with a good understanding of technology and social media can be guardians of the truth by reporting suspicious content and helping identify propagandist efforts.

This research aims to investigate the role of digital literacy in preventing the spread and planting of radical propaganda in Indonesia in the digital era. This research will explore how digital literacy understanding and skills can influence people's ability to identify, avoid, and report radical propaganda on social media, as well as how digital literacy can strengthen collective defenses against the influence of radicalism in the digital environment. Thus, this research aims to provide deeper insight into efforts to prevent radicalism and the spread of propaganda in Indonesia. This can help design more effective educational strategies and actions in facing this challenge.

## 2. Methods

This research uses the thematic analysis method to investigate radical content on the Twitter platform, with support from the Nvivo 12 Plus analysis tool. This method involves collecting data from Twitter that has the potential to contain radical content, and then the data is analyzed systematically to identify themes and patterns related to radicalism. Nvivo 12 Plus analysis tools were used to organize, group, and analyze data on a larger scale, allowing researchers to dig deep into the types of content, sources, and patterns of the spread of radicalism on the platform. Pendekan ini juga telah diadopsi dalam mengkaji beragam studi kasus lainnya [20]–[22]. With this combination of thematic analysis methods and sophisticated analytical tools, this research is expected to provide a deeper understanding of the dynamics of radicalism in social media environments such as Twitter.

## 3. Results and Discussion

The spread of propaganda related to radicalism on Twitter social media can be caused by several key factors. First, Twitter is a platform that allows users to spread messages quickly and widely to a global audience [23]. The ability to create anonymous or fake accounts also makes it easier for radical groups to operate undetected. This allows them

to design propaganda narratives that exploit certain social and political weaknesses and sway public opinion according to their goals [3].

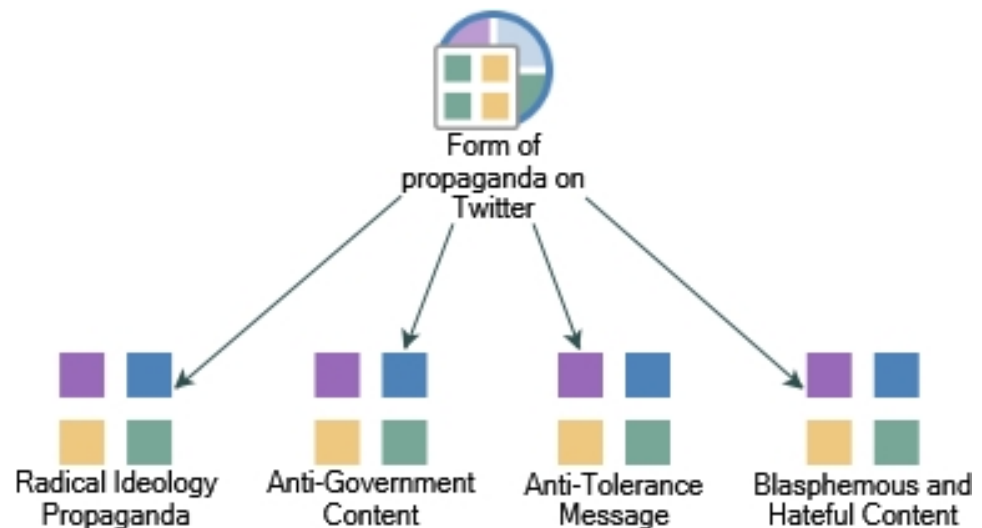
Additionally, Twitter algorithms designed to retain users on the platform by displaying content that matches their preferences can also play a role in spreading propaganda [24]. When users are repeatedly exposed to content that conforms to existing beliefs or views, they get trapped in information bubbles that reinforce their views. This is known as an “echo chamber,” which can strengthen radical understanding and promote the spread of propaganda without contradiction [25]. These factors make Twitter a potential platform for spreading radical propaganda that undermines social stability and security.

Data from the National Counterterrorism Agency (BNPT), which recorded an increase in propaganda trends on social media (medsos) during the COVID-19 pandemic, is very relevant to understanding the dynamics of radicalism in Indonesia. Even though the pandemic has reduced the potential for acts of terrorism, radical propaganda has become increasingly active on social media. This illustrates that radical groups are increasingly sophisticated in utilizing digital platforms to spread their messages [26]. The discovery of more than 600 potentially radical sites or accounts and more than 650 propaganda content shows the importance of digital literacy and efforts to prevent the spread of dangerous content on social media.

In addition, the takedown of hundreds of radical accounts by BNPT and collaboration with the Ministry of Communication and Information are positive steps in dealing with this threat. However, the challenges remain large considering the high volume of radical content circulating. Apart from that, BNPT also noted the handling of Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTF), which shows the complexity of security issues involving Indonesian citizens involved in conflicts abroad [26]. All of these findings show the importance of cross-sector cooperation and the active role of society in fighting radicalism in the digital era.

Propaganda that appears on social media, especially related to radicalism, can take various forms, including the following:

Radical propaganda on Twitter has serious potential to damage social stability and security and can influence individual behavior [3]. One common form of propaganda is “Radical Ideological Propaganda.” On these platforms, radical groups attempt to woo individuals with extreme ideologies, often trying to convince them that violence is a legitimate or necessary means of achieving their goals. This creates a potential threat to the security of society and the state.



**Figure 2:** Propaganda appearing on Twitter related to radicalism.

Additionally, “Anti-Government Content” can create political and social instability. When propaganda celebrates conspiracy theories, accuses governments of wrongdoing, or incites users to fight authorities, it can fuel tension and societal disruption. Criticism of the government is an important part of democracy, but when expressed as illegitimate propaganda, it can undermine the state’s foundations.

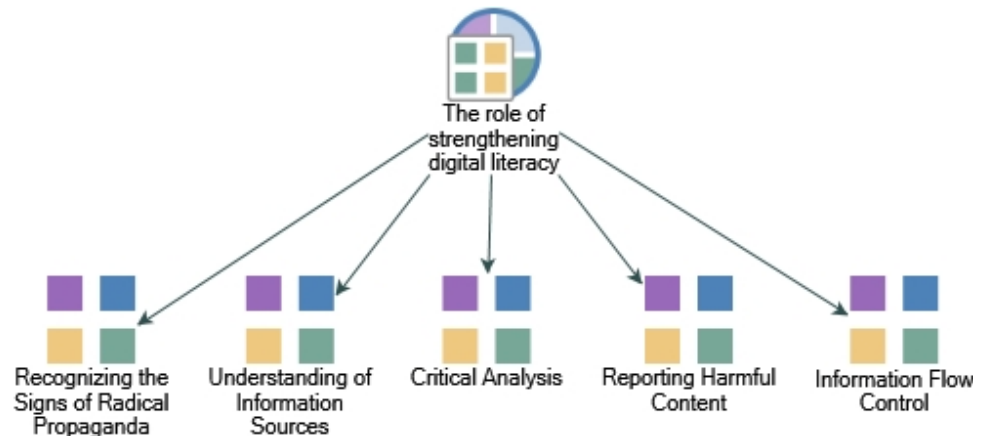
Other forms of propaganda identified were “Anti-Tolerance Messages” and “Blasphemous and Hateful Content”. Both forms of propaganda are also very dangerous because they fuel hostility between groups. This kind of propaganda can strengthen disapproval of certain groups based on differences in religion, ethnicity, or political views and can result in serious social conflict [27], [28]. This is a serious challenge for a country that seeks to maintain diversity and social harmony.

It is important to note that efforts to prevent the spread of radical propaganda on social media, such as Twitter, are important to maintaining social stability and state security [29], [30]. This requires cooperation between governments, social media platforms, and society to identify, report, and address this harmful content to prevent its negative influence on society [31], [32]. Awareness of the potential threats radical propaganda faces is an important first step in countering propagandists seeking to influence opinion and behavior through these digital platforms.

In this case, it is necessary to strengthen digital literacy to avoid existing propaganda. Digital literacy has a crucial role in preventing the spread of propaganda in Indonesia, especially in the increasingly developing digital era. Harmful propaganda can threaten social stability, societal harmony, and even state security. Therefore, understanding and digital literacy skills are important to fight this threat [33], [34]. This study also explores

how digital literacy acts as a first defense against propaganda in Indonesia, protecting society from manipulation and promoting a better understanding of information circulating in cyberspace.

The role of digital literacy in reducing propaganda related to radicalism is seen as follows:



**Figure 3:** The role of digital literacy in reducing propaganda related to radicalism.

Digital literacy plays a key role in efforts to prevent the spread of radical propaganda in the digital era. First, recognizing the signs of radical propaganda, such as extreme language or calls for violence, provides individuals with an initial defense tool against getting caught up in potentially damaging narratives. In addition, digital literacy equips users with skills in checking information sources, ensuring the validity of news, and preventing the spread of false information often used in propaganda. Critical analysis, at the heart of digital literacy, allows individuals to think more deeply about the information they consume. By asking questions and seeking further facts, they can expose flaws in propaganda and understand the difference between evidence-based arguments and dangerous rhetoric.

Furthermore, digital literacy encourages constructive action by allowing users to report dangerous content or propaganda to the authorities. This is an important step in reducing the spread of harmful content in cyberspace. Lastly, understanding how social media algorithms work allows individuals to control the flow of information they receive. In this way, they can avoid getting caught in information bubbles that reinforce their views and become prime targets for propagandists. Overall, digital literacy is a strong weapon in protecting society from the influence of radical propaganda on social media. This allows individuals to become more intelligent, critical, and responsible users in a digital world filled with information that can be used to influence opinion and behavior.

The government is crucial in increasing public literacy regarding preventing radical propaganda in the digital era. First, the government can strengthen digital literacy education in the school curriculum. This includes an early introduction to understanding the responsible and safe use of digital technology and training in critical skills in sorting information in cyberspace. Digital literacy training programs can also be held outside the school environment, such as at public libraries or community centers.

Second, the government can play a role in digital literacy awareness campaigns through mass media and social media platforms. They can work with educational institutions and civil society organizations to disseminate information about the risks of radical propaganda and how to overcome them. In addition, the government can also encourage social media platforms to develop tools that make it easier to report harmful content and enable filters that help reduce the spread of propaganda. With these steps, the government can play a central role in shaping a society that is more aware and responsive to the threat of radical propaganda in the digital world.

## 4. Conclusion

Radical propaganda spreading on social media seriously threatens society's stability and security, especially in the globally connected digital era. Digital literacy is critical in addressing these challenges by providing individuals with the tools to recognize, analyze, and counter harmful propaganda content. With digital literacy, society can build collective defenses against the spread of false and manipulative information and actively participate in reporting dangerous content to the authorities. However, these efforts also require an active response from the government, including integrating digital literacy education into school curricula and strong awareness campaigns to ensure that the public has the knowledge and skills necessary to overcome radical propaganda in cyberspace. We can build a safer and smarter digital environment for all with good cooperation between governments, educational institutions, social media platforms, and society.

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