

Conference Paper

The Freedom to Express Opinion Through Social Media: A Study of Higher Degree Students in Jakarta and Vicinity

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Abstract

This study aims to identify how higher degree students use social media to express their opinions circumventing the limitations imposed by the Information and Electronic Act in Indonesia. The students, in this fashion, conform to the roles defined in The Youth Act which require them to bravely and wisely speak up for what is right. There are three questions which were posed: 1) do the students use social media to express their opinion; 2) what types of matters are discussed; and 3) do the students think that they are free to express these opinions on social media? This research applies a qualitative approach. The data was gained through interviews. There are 12 members of student bodies who were interviewed. They come from 5 different universities in Jakarta and vicinity. The results are: 1) all of them use social media, however not all of them critical opinions of the government via this medium; 2) 50% felt that students function as agents of change; and 3) around 40% of students feel they have the freedom to express their opinion vis social media and agree with the limitations imposed by government regulations. Therefore, it can be concluded that the students manage to express their opinion through social media and perform their roles as stated in the Youth Act.

Keywords: social media, freedom to express opinion, higher degree students

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1. Introduction

The freedom to express opinion for public consumption could be protected differently in every jurisdiction. The reports from the Law Library of Congress based on the survey which was conducted in 2019 shown the results that all the 13 countries (the countries lie in the continent of Asia, Europe, America, and the Oceania) implement various limitation on the freedom of expression. The limitation, however, is accordance with the European Convention on Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) when it is regulated through laws [1].

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In regards with the ICCPR, Indonesia is one of countries which ratified it. The ICCPR was ratified in 2006 [2] Indonesia has her own stand related with the “the right of self-determination” which is stated in Article 1 of the ICCPR. Indonesia agrees to that as far that such right is not used as a justification for any action to harm the unity of country [3]. One of regulations which is implemented in Indonesia in keeping the unity of Indonesia at the moment is the Act Number 11 Year 2008 in regards Information and Electronic Transactions [4] and its amendment. The Act is amended through the Act Number 19 Year 2016 [5]. This Acts regulate the limitation to the freedom of expressing opinion through online media. Freedom often believed that every creature seeks. The freedom to express opinion is one of freedom that is everyone willingly to have. There are many writings that have been written by scholars regarding this matter [6–8].

The conversations of the freedom to express opinion can be deducted to area of moral, law, human right and democracy. In this digital information era, the conversation also includes social media area. As has been mentioned above that the freedom to express opinion in social media is limited by the Information and Electronic Transactions Act. Such limitation has been argued by many Indonesians as reducing the freedom to express opinion [9, 10].

Social media platforms are one of medium for anyone who wants to express his/ her opinion which could give great impacts [6, 7]. There are many youths who express their opinion to critic government of Indonesia through social media. The number of Youth who uses internet in Indonesia are majority at the age of 15-19 and 25-29 [11].

When they express their opinion on the performances of the government, they conduct what is stated in Articles 16 and 17 of the Act Number 40 Year 2009 in regards Youth (Undang-Undang Nomor 40 Tahun 2009 tentang Kepemudaan). [12] The essences of both articles are expressing that youths should have great and important roles as the members of society and as citizens. The Article 16 states “*Pemuda berperan aktif sebagai kekuatan moral, kontrol sosial, dan agen perubahan dalam segala aspek pembangunan nasional.*” (Youth actively play roles as morality strength, social control, and agents of change in every aspects of national development). Furthermore, the Article 17 states the manifestations of those roles, they are as stated in the table below:

From the above table, it can be concluded that the youths’ roles should be conducted and shown to as many as people they can get. Thus, their engagement with social media to express their opinion on the performances of government becomes linier with their roles.

In regards with the engagements of youths with social media when they critic the government, they must take into account the Article 27 verses (1), (3); and the Article

TABLE 1: The Manifestations of the Roles of Youths

No	Moral Strength	Social Control	Agents of Change
1	<i>Menumbuhkembangkan aspek etik dan moralitas dalam bertindak pada setiap dimensi kehidupan kepemudaan;</i> (Developing ethical and moral aspects in behaviour on every dimension of youth life);	<i>Memperkuat wawasan kebangsaan;</i> (strengthen nationalism perspective)	<i>Mengembangkan Pendidikan politik dan demokratisasi;</i> (developing political education and democratization)
2	<i>Memperkuat iman dan takwa serta ketahanan mental-spiritual; dan/atau</i> (strengthening faith and piety and mental spiritual endurance); and/or	<i>Membangkitkan kesadaran atas tanggungjawab, hak, dan kewajiban sebagai warga negara;</i> (raising the awareness of responsibilities, rights and obligations as citizen);	<i>Sumberdaya ekonomi;</i> (economic resources)
3	<i>Meningkatkan kesadaran hukum.</i> (Increasing legal awareness).	<i>Membangkitkan sikap kritis terhadap lingkungan dan penegakan hukum;</i> (Promoting a critical attitude towards the environment and the law enforcement)	<i>Kepedulian terhadap masyarakat;</i> (Concern for the society)
4		<i>Meningkatkan partisipasi dalam perumusan kebijakan publik;</i> (Increasing participation in drafting public policy)	<i>Ilmu pengetahuan dan teknologi;</i> (Science and technology)
5		<i>Menjamin transparansi dan akuntabilitas publik; dan/atau</i> (Ensuring transparency and public accountability)	<i>Olahraga, seni, dan budaya;</i> (Sport, art, and culture)
6		<i>Memberikan kemudahan akses informasi.</i> (Providing easy access to information).	<i>Kepedulian terhadap lingkungan hidup;</i> (Awareness towards living environment)
7			<i>Pendidikan kewirausahaan; dan/atau</i> (Entrepreneurship education; and or)
8			<i>Kepemimpinan dan kepeloporan kepemudaan.</i> (Leadership and pioneering youths)

28 verses (1) and (2); the Article 32 (1); and the Article 35 and also the Articles which stipulate penalties of the violations of the Information and Electronic Act [4, 5].

In June 2019, the Ministry of Technology, Research, and Higher Education stated that higher degree students' social media are being monitored. The Ministry, however, only monitors things in related with radicalization and intolerance [13].

The previous research which have been conducted in regards with the freedom to express opinion through social media found by the authors through google scholar

so far discuss about self-disclosure through instagram [14]; how the higher degree students use smartphone to communicate optimally with others [15]; the evaluation on the Information and Electronic Act in limiting the freedom of expression through social media [16]; Public Opinion in Police versus KPK Case which are expressed in twitter [17]; and the higher degree students' ability to recognize hoax in media social related to develop their entrepreneurship (18). The gaps which are found based on the research is that the research which have been conducted in regards with the freedom of expression in social media is a library research, while research which related with higher degree students are not conducted in Jakarta and vicinity. Thus, this study aims to seek how higher degree students bring benefit of the existence of social media to express their opinion in accordance limitations by the Information and Electronic Act in Indonesia. The students, however, should manage themselves to fulfill the roles as stated in The Youth Act (as has been discussed earlier) which need them to bravely and wisely speak up to stand for what is right.

2. Methods

This research applies qualitative approach. The data is provided through interviews 12 (twelve) higher degrees students from 5 (five) universities in Jakarta and vicinity, they are: Universitas Negeri Jakarta (Jakarta), Universitas Indonesia (Depok), Universitas Syarif Hidayatullah (Tangerang), Bogor Agricultural University (Bogor), and Universitas Islam 45 (Bekasi). The students are members of student body of their faculty or universities. The reasons to choose students who are members of student body are because they tend to be more critical and more vocal. The interviews are conducted in August and September 2019. All the students are interviewed by the same interviewers using the same list of question. There are three questions which have arisen to the students, they are: 1) do the students use social media to express their opinion? 2) what types of matters that students use social media in expressing their opinion? and 3) do the students think that they are free in expressing their opinion in social media? The interviews are recorded, transcribed, and reduced to seek data which relevant to answer the questions for this article. The data are analyzed by implementing content analysis [19] before interpreting the results and defining the conclusions.

3. Results

All the students are asked the same three questions, below are the results based on the responses given by 12 students:

Question 1: do the students use social media to express their opinion?

- All students who are being interviewed have social media accounts and use the social media. One student can have up to 6 (six) social media accounts. The platforms that they use are Instagram (8 students), facebook (5 students), whatsapp (4 students), twitter (3 students), blog/website (3 students), line (2 students), and snapchat (1 students). Only 3 students have 1 social media each. One student has the biggest number of social media—he/she has 6 social media accounts. The highest number of social media accounts which is used by the students is instagram. The answers are shown in the pie chart below.

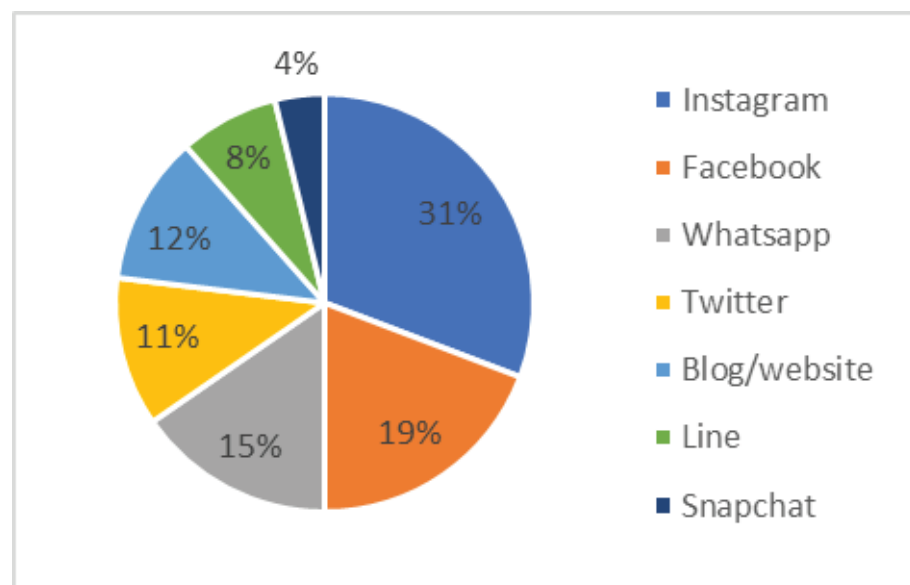


Figure 1: The Types of Social Media Use by the Students

Question 2: what types of matters that students use social media to express their opinion?

- There are eight types of answers, they are: mostly to communicate with her/his friends; she/he is not brave enough to use social media to express her/his opinion; as social influencer to maintain the unity of our nation; to express something she/he has heard and believe it is good; to express opinion related to politics; to express opinion on science; issues on sexual assaults, human rights, the influences of liberalization to students' lives; to express opinion on the policy from

the government and campus' management; and to express opinion on violations on policies. Thus, the results are as shown by the table below:

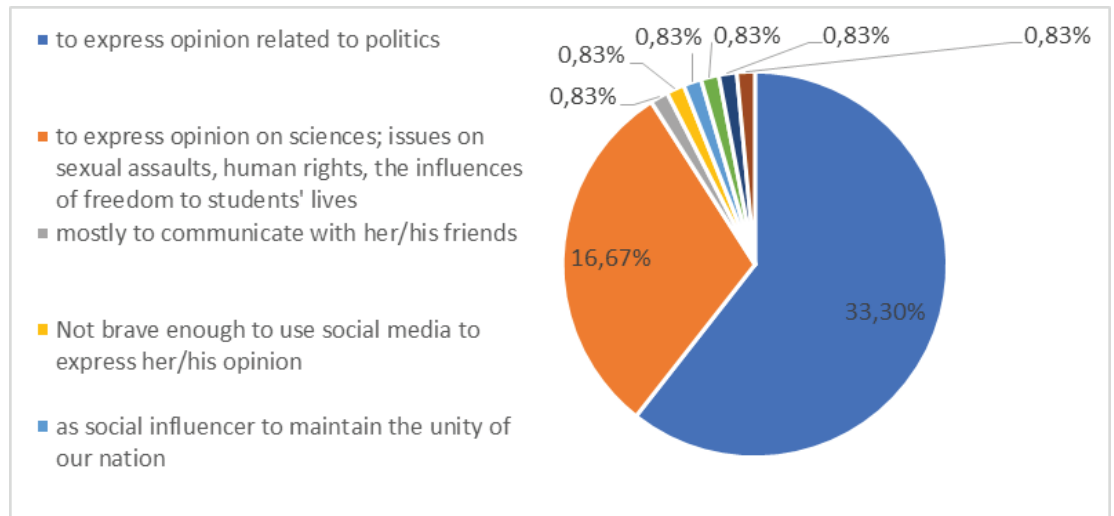


Figure 2: Types of Matters the Students Use Social Media

Question 3: do the students think that they are free in expressing their thoughts in social media?

- In regards with the limitation to express opinion in social media, the answers of the students can be categorized: students who feel the freedom (3 students); feel free and agree with limitation by laws (5 students); students who do not feel the freedom (3 students); unclear respond (1 student). In other way to express the results is that 67% of students feel the freedom to express their opinion through social media with 42% aware on the limitations by laws and agree with it. The results can be seen in the pie chart below:

4. Discussion

As the members of prominent groups in their universities, all the students can be said as role models or influencers for their students. They should implement what stated in the Youth Act—as morality strength, social control, and agents of change. Nevertheless, they should manage their egos and have knowledge on how to express their opinion through social media in order not to violate any laws in Indonesia.

As stated in the introduction section that almost all youth in Indonesia use internet. The results of this research confirm that fact. The numbers of platform of social media that each of them uses vary. Even, one of them uses up to six social media platforms. The most favorite platform is Instagram.

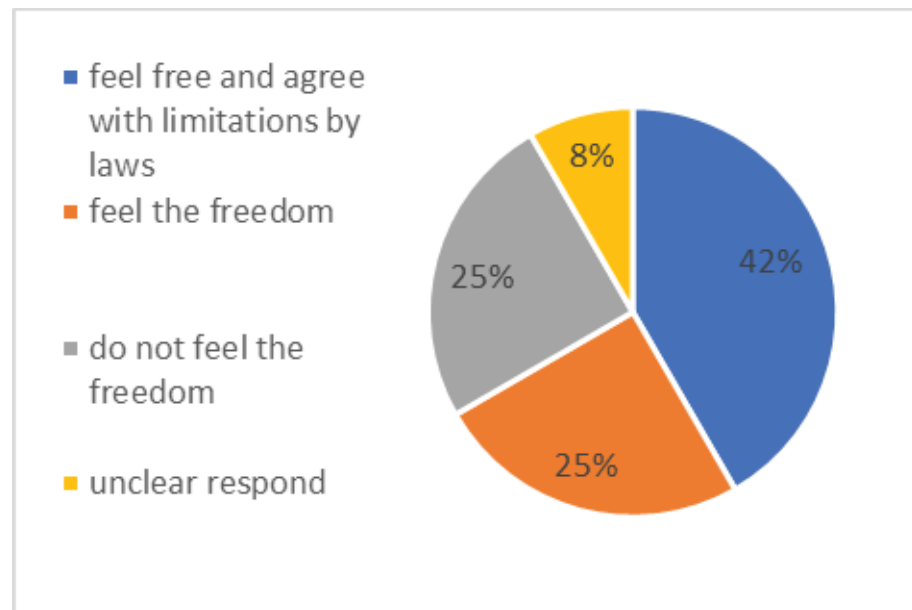


Figure 3: Numbers of Students Who Feel/Do Not Feel the Freedom to Express Opinion Through Social Media

In regards with the question on what the students use their social media account for, based on the categorization of the types of matters on the roles of Youths as mandated in the Act Number 40 Year 2009 in regards Youth (*Undang-Undang Nomor 40 Tahun 2009 tentang Kepemudaan*), almost all students (11 out of 12) as a group can be stated use social media as youth which stated in the Act. It is because they have performed the three dimensions of roles as moral strength, social control, and agents of change.

Based on those categorizations, unfortunately not all of answers can be identified to the roles of Youths as stated on the Act. The biggest number of the roles that the students perform is as agents of change with 6 students (50%). While the students who perform their roles as social control 4 students. And the least number is moral strength which is performed by 1 student. In addition, based on the student's answer there is 1 that cannot be included into those three roles.

Based on the answers from all the students in regards with the third question, most of the students are aware with their position (as influencers for their friends and/or agent of change), and aware of the regulations and the benefit for our nation. However, there are some students who are willingly to have limitless freedom to express opinion through social media. They believe that as a democracy country, Indonesia does not give such freedom. Nevertheless, there are more students who feel the freedom to express their opinion and agree with the limitations given by the laws, particularly by the Information and Electronic Act.

TABLE 2: The Categorizations of Roles Based on the Youth Act

Responses from the Students	The Categories of the Manifestations of Roles Based on the Youths Act
Mostly to communicate with my friends (1 student)	Provide easy access to communicate (categorized as social control)
He is not brave enough to use social media to express his opinion (1 student)	Cannot be categorized
As social influencer to maintain the unity of our nation (1 student)	Strengthen national perspective (categorized as social control)
To express something that we have heard, and we believe it is good (1 student)	Developing ethical and moral aspects in behaviour on every dimension of youth life (categorized as moral strength)
To express opinion related to politics (4 students)	developing political education and democratization (categorized as agents of change)
To express opinion on science; issues on sexual assaults, human rights, the influences of liberalization to students' lives (2 students)	Concern for the society (categorized as agents of change)
To express opinion on the policy from the government and campus' management (1 students)	Increasing participation in drafting public policy (categorized as social control)
To express opinion on violations on policies (1 students)	Promoting a critical attitude towards the environment and the law enforcement (categorized as social control)

5. Conclusion

The higher degree students are the future leaders. They should manage their behavior including how to express their opinion through social media. Based on the research which has been conducted, the students which have been interviewed have social media account, most of them are aware of the need to express their opinion through social media as it gives certain impact(s) as they have three roles given by the Youth Act. Types of matters that students use social media in expressing their opinion are: developing political education and democratization, concern for the society, providing easy access to information, strengthen nationalism perspective, developing ethical and moral aspects in behavior on every dimension of youth life, increasing participation in drafting public policy, promoting a critical attitude towards the environment and the law enforcement, and cannot be categorized. Fortunately, even though there are some students who do not agree with the limitations which are regulated by laws on the freedom to express opinion through social media, most of the students do feel the freedom and believe that the limitation is needed.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors have no conflict of interest to declare.

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