Verbal Aggression on Social Media Instagram and Political Disengagement on Voters in Indonesia

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Abstract. This study aimed to examine the influence of verbal aggression on political disengagement in voters. We employed quasi-experimental research design with 152 college students. They were matched and randomly group based on the two groups (experimental and control group). Participants got the research stimulus (verbal aggression posting in Instagram). The results showed that there was influence of verbal aggression on political disengagement in millennial generation (p=0.027). This study can be the first step in understanding verbal aggression on social media and political disengagement to voters in Indonesia.

Keywords: political disengagement, verbal aggression, social media

Introduction

The characteristics of modern politics, including offensive advertising, negative media coverage, and conflict among public officials, can lead to attacks on politics (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Crotty & Jacobson, 1980 in Yamamoto et al., 2016). Some experts argue that the news media's negative portrayal of various participants in politics, as well as advertisements that are offensive in nature can reduce citizens' political participation (Tedesco, 2002). In an era of massive use of social media, media depictions do not only come from the mass media, but from content created voluntarily by the community itself.

The public often finds various media content containing messages of hate speech. Not a few of these messages contain invitations to antagonize certain parties, corner other parties, mention the ugliness of other parties or find fault, and insult other parties. There are also propaganda messages that contain calls to be careful of people from certain groups or indirectly want to incite the public to vote for certain groups (S13, 2017).

One of the social media that has contributed to political life is Instagram. The Minister of Communication Technology and Informatics, Rudiantara, said that social

media Instagram and Facebook have become fields for hate speech. According to Rudiantara, of the approximately four thousand accounts that were taken down by Kominfo since the end of May 2018, almost half of them were on Instagram and Facebook. Trends in hate speech monitored by Kominfo are still around 20 thousand accounts (JNP, 2018).

The use of social media for news consumption and political activities has grown since the 2008 presidential campaign, especially among the younger generation aged 18-29 years (Mitchell, Kiley, Gottfried, & Guskin, 2013 in Yamamoto et al., 2016). Exposure to this information on the internet could make potential voters became more cynical and distrustful of political candidates and the political system (Kaid et al., 2007).

Little is known about the role of social media in influencing political disengagement in Indonesia. Previous research in Indonesia has shown that social media can influence political activity (Suwana, 2019). This makes social media as a mean to carry out political campaigns (Abdillah, 2014). Political campaigns through social media not only promoting something constructive but can also be used to attack political ideas or parties (Lim, 2017). There are several social media options that are actively used in Indonesia, one of which is popularly used to deliver a message is Instagram (Indika & Jovita, 2017). In this study, the focus of the research is to look at the effect of verbal aggression on Instagram social media on political disengagement.

According to Lee (2005) political disengagement is a negative action or behavior that can restrain political behavior such as not voting or reducing other forms of community participation. According to Henn et al., (2007) political disengagement is a decrease in support and support for political organizations (including parties) and their absence to vote in elections.

The difference between political disengagement and political participation is that political disengagement is an invisible behavior or covert behavior that can be used to explain psychological factors that can predict political participation.

The dimensions of political disengagement were obtained from various different studies or several journals related to political disengagement in the range of 2005 to 2016, namely the journals Lee (2005), Henn, et al., (2007), Snell (2010), Manning & Holmes (2013), and Yamamoto, et al., (2016) then the author summarizes all the dimensions of political

disengagement from several of these journals. The dimensions of political disengagement are as follows:

a. Distrust are individuals who are disengaged because they do not trust the political system and politicians (Snell, 2010).

b. Cynicism is defined as distrust of governments or individual politicians to have the best interest of the common people. Where these interests conflict with the interests of politically connected groups or individuals, or the interests of politicians themselves (Lee, 2005). Cynicism can act as an incentive to disengage from political systems that the political system believes are inappropriate for their involvement (Manning & Holmes, 2013).

c. Apathy are individuals who really don't care and are not at all interested in political topics (Snell, 2010). Apathy is defined as an unwillingness or unwillingness to engage in politics (Austin & Pinkleton, 1995 in Yamamoto, et al., 2016).

d. Disconnected is individual behavior not to vote in general elections (Russell et al., 2002; O'Toole et al., 2003; Phelps, 2005 in Henn et al., 2007). Disconnected is also the feeling of individuals who feel that politicians do not have a relationship with the community, do not meet with the community and that politicians make policies that do not meet their needs.

e. Political efficacy (Powerlessness or the lack of efficacy) is an individual who feels he cannot influence the political process. Efficacy refers to beliefs about how far one's participation can make a difference in politics (Lee, 2005).

According to Infante & Wigley (1986), verbal aggression is seen as an exchange of messages between two people in which at least one person attacks another person's self-concept to hurt that person psychologically. Verbal aggressiveness is conceptualized as a personality trait that predisposes people to attack others' self-concepts. Meanwhile, according to Buss & Perry (1992 in Eliani, Yuniardi, and Masturah, 2018) verbal aggression is a motor component such as injuring and hurting other people through verbal expressions, for example arguing to show dislike or disapproval, spreading gossip, and sometimes being sarcastic.

According to Infante and Wigley (1986) there are many types of verbal aggression messages, namely character attacks, competence attacks, insults, malicious expressions in the form of curses, swearing, insults, satire, ridicule, profanity, and other nonverbal symbols. In this study, the researchers focused on discussing verbal aggression behavior carried out on social media in the form of character attacks carried out by insulting abilities, non-verbal sign attacks carried out by uploading photos, and competency attacks carried out by direct attacking with negative sentences, insulting or mocking behavior, and swearing behavior in the context of the 2019 Presidential Election.

This study seeks to see the effect of verbal aggression, especially on Instagram, on political detachment among voters in Indonesia. Instagram is a medium that is quite widely used by political celebrities to market their ideas (Lalancette & Raynauld, 2019). In Indonesia, political research uses Instagram social media more on tourism brand marketing (Fatanti & Suyatna, 2015). This causes the researcher to choose to use social media Instagram in this study.

Method

Participants

A total of 152 college students, in the age range of 19 to 34 years participated in this experiment. Among the participants, 39 were male and 113 were female. These 152 participants were divided by matching and randomized into 76 participants for each of the experimental and control groups.

Design

The research design was a randomized matched pretest-posttest design. In this study, there were two groups consisting of an experimental group and a control group. Photos of verbal aggression uploaded on Instagram were given to the experimental group, while the control group will not get any treatment. The independent variable in this study is verbal aggression while the dependent variable is political disengagement. This research was conducted to see the effect of verbal aggression on the political disengagement of the millennial generation.

Procedure

This research was conducted in June 2019 at Mercu Buana University. The implementation of the research was carried out after a month of the general election taking place. Traces of division or polarization due to fierce political contestation were still very much felt. The traces of division could not be easily removed because fake news or hoaxes still exist, which were alleged to have also influenced public perception.

The implementation of the research was carried out in a closed classroom. In the early stages of conducting the research, the researcher prepared informed consent sheets, research stimulus or treatment (uploading photos containing verbal aggression on Instagram), manipulation check questions, and statement items for the dependent variable, namely political disengagement. All participants were given a pretest a week before the experiment took place, both in the experimental and control groups. The pretest given is in the form of informed consent, personal data consisting of name, gender, age, address, telephone number, religion, party chosen during the 2019 election, 2019 presidential election, and social organizations that they have participated, as well as preliminary questions in the form of giving a score on the question of how often to read political information on Instagram and how often to see hate speech content about politics on Instagram, and closed with a political disengagement questionnaire.

Based on the results of the pretest data, matching and randomization were carried out to divide the participants into the experimental and control groups. Then, the researchers divided 76 participants into each group. The experimental group was given a photo upload of verbal aggression on Instagram that has been tested for manipulation. Participants in the experimental group will see and read the uploaded verbal aggression photos on a separate sheet from the post test, namely the manipulation sheet. Whereas the control group was not given any stimulus or treatment, participants were asked to immediately fill out the posttest. For the manipulation check, the experimental group was asked to answer short questions with yes or no answer options. The question is "do you understand the picture? Is there hate speech content in the image? Does the image evoke any particular emotion? If so, what kind of emotions did you feel?".

The researcher uploaded a photo of verbal aggression on Instagram consisting of 10 statements from supporters of the presidential candidate Jokowi, called camp one, and supporters of presidential candidate Prabowo, called camp two during the 2019

presidential election. The five statements from camp one are as follows; (a) "How come Pak Prabowo's attitude is exactly the same as that of the supporters of the caliphate, right? Always spreading fear, pessimism, unclear emotions and paranoia", (b) "Prabowo is a failure as the head of the family. His religion is also not clear. How are you going to lead Indonesia if you can't lead your own body???", (c) "You bastard, his brain is upside down! Hoax spreaders, presidential candidates don't have achievements, just defend them", (d) "I urge Jokowi volunteers not to prevent volunteer 02 from hallucinating", and (e) "Wowo/Prabowo are likened to Soekarno. Sandiaga is likened to Bung Hatta. Ratna Sarumpaet is likened to Cut Nyak Dien. Mad people are free."

Meanwhile, the five statements from the second side are as follows: (a) "Increasingly, how come it seems that someone is controlling Mr. President? It's like someone is holding the remote control. Sometimes he looked dumbfounded like a service provider with no signal, sometimes he suddenly attacks, sometimes it looks like he ran out of battery, sometimes he look like he picked up other frequencies", (b) "Jokowi is always stupid, makes rubbish hoaxes, even speaks in vain, and feels that he is always right", (c) "You stupid tadpole! It's not clear why the President is supported. April 17 2019, the fraud that you have been making all this time will be destroyed", (d) "Pak De...... When will you campaigning at the mental hospital..? I am willing to skip work... watching Pak De meet your volunteers...", and (e) "Admin cebongers. Hanum, a dentist spreading hoaxes who claims to have examined Ratna Sarumpaet's wounds. Amin Rais, a person who makes a dichotomy between political parties and Allah's party. What common sense do you offer? Mocking others. You're also someone with flawed reason."

At the time of conducting the research, the experimental group participants were asked to remain in the classroom while the control group participants were asked to wait outside the room. After the experimental group participants finished receiving the treatment, the control group participants were welcome to re-enter to fill out the posttest together.

Research Instruments

Verbal aggression

Verbal aggression is a stimulus or treatment in this study. Verbal aggression was given in the form of uploading photos that already meet indicators of verbal aggression based on content judgment and rating or level of verbal aggression from several people at Mercu Buana University. Based on the theory of Infante and Wigley (1986), indicators of verbal aggression are (1) character attack is done by insulting ability, (2) non-verbal sign attack is done by uploading a photo and (3) competency attack is done by attacking directly with negative sentences. , derogatory or mocking behavior, and abusive behavior.

Political disengagement

Political disengagement is the dependent variable of this research. Political disengagement is measured using a scale constructed by researchers by adapting and modifying research or journals Lee 2005; Henn, et al., 2007; Snell, 2010; Manning & Holmes 2013; Yamamoto, et al., 2016. The scale used is a Likert scale model consisting of favorable and unfavorable items. The score for the answers consists of 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). In this study, the political disengagement measuring tool has an alpha – Cronbach coefficient of 0.843.

Result

The results of the analysis of the Wilcoxon test on the comparison of the pretest and post-test scores of the experimental group and the independent t-test prove that there is an effect of verbal aggression on political disengagement of the millennial generation.

The results of the Wilcoxon test between the pretest scores of the experimental group and the posttest of the experimental group obtained the Sig. of 0.004 or the value of Sig. < 0.05. From the results of the analysis, it is known that the average pretest value is 64.84 and after being given treatment the average post test value becomes 67.11. It can be seen in table 1. The results of the independent test obtained the results of the Sig. namely 0.027 or the value of Sig. <0.05 and the t-count value is 2,234 or greater than the t-table value, namely 1,992 (df = 75, l.o.s = 005). Can be seen in table 2.

Table 1.

Wilcoxon test table to see differences in pretest and posttest values of the experimental group.

Kelompok eksperimen	Mean	Std. Dev.	N	Sig. (2-Tailed)
Pretest	64,84	9,264	76	0,004

Post test	67,11	10,508		

Table 2.
Independent test table to determine the effect of verbal aggression on political disengagement using gain score data

Gain score	Mean	Std. Dev.	T	Sig. (2-Tailed)
Pretest	2,26	6,769	2,234	0,027
Post test	-,37	7,723		

These results are consistent with the manipulation check conducted by the researchers. In the manipulation check, participants answered yes or no multiple-choice questions and short questions. The results of the manipulation check found that participants understood the verbal aggression photo upload (treatment), participants understood that the image contained hate speech content, and 59 out of 76 participants in the experimental group felt that the image evokes emotions such as annoyance, anger, hatred, disapproval. Disbelief, prejudice, anger, disappointment, and feeling provoked. Some of the emotions felt by participants are part of the political disengagement dimension.

As for the results of the paired samples test between the pretest and posttest of the control group, the Sig. namely 0.679 or the value of Sig. > 0.05 and the t-count value is 0.416 or smaller than the t-table value, namely 1.992 (df = 75, l.o.s = 005). So it can be concluded that there was no influence of verbal aggression on political disengagement in the control group

Discussion

In this study, Instagram social media with verbal aggression content has been shown to have an influence on political disengagement in voters. This means that young voters who were exposed to verbal aggressive content on social media Instagram will be less interested in voting for the presidential election in the 2019 election. Political engagement and political disengagement are part of political participation. According to Henn, Weinstein, & Hodgkinson (2007) people can be interested in politics and at the same time have political disengagement. This is due to public perception of the government's political policies. In this study, the influence of verbal aggression through Instagram social media has had an influence on the occurrence of political disengagement. This means that

in addition to perceptions of government policies, mutual insults on social media between supporters of political camps can also influence political participation, especially towards political disengagement.

Yamamoto, Kushin, & Dalisay (2017) have found that young voters who get information through social media are easy to act cynical and apathetic towards politics. With an age range of 19-34 years, this research completes the understanding that in Indonesia social media can be a variable influencing political detachment. This detachment can be shown from cynical attitudes and apathy towards politics.

According to Vromen (2017) social media has formed a new political norm. This norm has made public relations with politics present in two worlds, online and offline. Political messages are also presented in the context of these two worlds. In this study, political messages containing verbal aggression against each presidential candidate had an influence on voters' political interest. In this study, voters who were exposed to messages with verbal aggression had a more cynical and apathetic attitude, which made them not interested in the politics of selecting presidential candidates. This is in line with research conducted by Lee (2005) regarding the role of the media in influencing voter cynicism.

In this study, contents with verbal aggression shown to voters has affected the political attachment of voters. These results are consistent with previous research conducted by Tedesco (2012) that the news media's negative portrayal of various participants in politics, as well as offensive advertisements reduce citizens' political participation and reduce voters. This is also in line with recent research on social media which has a role in increasing and decreasing voter turnout due to the political participation of young voters who are more active online (Mustapha & Omar, 2020).

According to Snell (2010) the process of distrust of political actors can reduce attachment to politics (political engagement). Political actors are seen as parties who cannot be trusted and are unable to bring about change. In this study, distrust was measured on items such as "it seems that politicians only care about themselves or their special interests" and "it seems that our government is run by some big interests that only prioritize themselves". From this study, verbal aggression committed against presidential candidates may be the cause of distrust of political actors. This distrust may be the process by which voters feel less involved in politics and experience political disengagement.

In the context of general elections, citizens who feel they are not involved in politics may not vote or vote. According to Micheletti (2015) citizens can vote even though they do not feel involved in politics (experiencing political disengagement). This is due to differences in motives that exist in the voters. From the results of this study, verbal aggression containing negative content towards each presidential candidate has proven to have an influence on increasing political disengagement, but that does not mean that this directly affects non-involvement in voting in the 2019 election

Conclusion

This study aims to see the effect of verbal aggression on the political disengagement of the millennial generation. The results of this study indicate that there is an influence of verbal aggression on political disengagement among voters in Indonesia with a background of students aged 19-34 years.

Suggestion

It is necessary to carry out further research that examines how the influence of verbal aggression in this case in the form of photos or videos will affect political disengagement. Further research is needed to find out whether the percentage of political disengagement will increase or decrease if given verbal aggression in the form of photos or videos.

This study has limitations, namely the sample with a student background and only 19-34 years old. This research is only limited to the context of the general election for presidential candidates. Matters related to other political issues are not discussed in this study. This research needs to be developed with a more controlled approach to the manipulation and selection of respondents, so that a better understanding of the political behavior of voters in Indonesia is obtained.

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