

The Role of Mass Media in Shaping Public Opinion After the 2024 Election

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Abstract

In 2024, the Indonesian people will once again face a general election to choose a new president to lead the country. Political figures are actively conducting large-scale campaigns to secure the most votes and attract public attention. This is closely linked to the role of the media as an information source in delivering political messages in various formats, such as news broadcasts, talk shows, and advertisements, which shape and influence public perceptions of presidential candidates and their political parties. Thus, the media is believed to still play a significant role in shaping public opinion. This study employs a qualitative descriptive research method aimed at gaining an in-depth understanding of the role of mass media in shaping public opinion after the 2024 election. The research is conducted through a literature review, collecting various theories from newspaper analyses, articles, and relevant books to understand media framing and its impact on public opinion. The findings of this study indicate that the role of mass media and public opinion has a significant influence on people's political behavior. Through mass media and social media, the public can be influenced in forming political attitudes, making voting decisions, and engaging in political participation.

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Introduction

With the rapid growth of communication technology, both mass media and social media platforms have experienced significant advancements (Musfialdy, 2015). The presence of media has now become an inseparable part of human life. In almost every aspect of life, both individually and collectively, media has become an essential and unavoidable source of information. Along with technological progress, mass media and social media are no longer just tools for accessing information but also serve other functions, such as facilitating interaction, sharing content, and shaping public opinion. Therefore, it can be said that technological advancements, which have given rise to various media platforms, both mass media and social media, have made them a primary necessity for individuals and society as a whole.

The impact of mass media is generally broad and highly influential. The level of media influence on the political sphere depends on the characteristics of a country's political system. The primary role of mass media in society is to provide education, deliver information, and serve as a source of entertainment (Islami & Zitri, 2023). In the era of globalization, media in Indonesia also functions as a tool for social control and as the fourth pillar of democracy, where press freedom serves as a benchmark for a country's democratization.

As the 2024 election approaches, social media plays a major role in the rapid dissemination of political information through various platforms such as Twitter, TikTok, Instagram, and others. After the 2024 election, social media is expected to continue having a significant impact, particularly in spreading political information that influences public opinion regarding presidential candidates and political parties. Additionally, media platforms serve as strategic tools in political campaign execution. As the primary source of information, mass media provides voters with free access to election-related information.

Media plays a significant role in delivering crucial information that upholds democratic principles. However, in reality, many media outlets fail to maintain consistency in fulfilling their responsibilities. One such example is television. As a primary channel for news consumption and entertainment, television has a major impact on public views and attitudes toward various issues, including politics. Ironically, the involvement of television station owners in politics can weaken media independence and integrity.

The interaction between media ownership and political interests can lead to bias in information presentation. For example, in the context of the 2024 election, media owned by individuals or groups affiliated with specific political interests tend to provide coverage that favors certain candidates or parties. When broadcasting election news, television media that align with particular political groups often highlight candidates and parties that match their preferences while either neglecting or criticizing their political opponents. This can result in unbalanced and misleading information for viewers, ultimately disrupting the democratic process, which should uphold transparency and fairness.

Therefore, it is crucial for mass media, particularly television media, to maintain independence and prioritize integrity in delivering information to the public. The involvement of media owners in politics must be carefully monitored, and strict ethical standards should be enforced to prevent bias and manipulation in news coverage and political programs. This step is necessary to ensure that the public receives objective and balanced information, serving as a fundamental pillar for a healthy democratic process.

Thus, this study aims to gain a deeper understanding of the role of mass media in shaping public opinion after the 2024 election, particularly in shaping public perceptions of presidential candidates and political parties. This study takes into account the dynamics of political communication and the overall process of opinion formation in the post-election period.

Mass Media and Public Opinion Formation

Mass media, including newspapers, films, radio, and television, are mechanical communication tools that function to deliver news from the sender to the receiver (Hamdani Thaha, 2009). Mass media has a significant influence on human existence due to its extensive network and ability to penetrate various aspects of life. In addition to serving as an information provider and mediator, mass media also functions as a social decision-maker and an educational tool. Print media, electronic media, and various other forms of media fall into this category.

Today, society has become accustomed to communicating with one another daily, anytime and anywhere, through mass media. Every individual needs media to obtain information about various events happening around them. The relationship between media, politics, politicians, and the government has long been established. Mass media and politicians have a mutually beneficial and interdependent relationship. Journalists need politicians and government officials as sources of information, while politicians need the media to convey ideas and policies that have been or are being decided in the public interest (Baharuddin, 2023).

Mass media plays a strategic role in Indonesia's 2024 elections. In this context, the media is expected to function as an accurate information provider and a social watchdog during the election period. The role of mass media is crucial in determining the success of the election by providing educational and empowering information to enable the public to make informed decisions.

On issues of public concern, public opinion is a consensus of views expressed by the majority of society. This definition suggests that an individual will accept an opinion as truth if a significant number of people share the same perspective. Public opinion can take the form of personal opinions, individual or group opinions, and can be categorized into majority opinion, minority opinion, or mass opinion. The process of forming public opinion goes through several stages, including the emergence of an issue that needs resolution, the search for alternative solutions, and the expression of reactions to the issue.

Public opinion, as defined by Nimmo, is a process that integrates the ideas, sentiments, and aspirations of the general public with the political decisions made by government bodies. This process occurs in situations marked by disputes, conflicts, and uncertainty regarding the most effective course of action (Sri Choiriyati, 2015). Mass media has a significant impact on how society understands and interprets information, as well as in decision-making. In some cases, mass media is even used as a propaganda tool to shape public opinion and influence political decisions.

Through its content, mass media can represent the interests of certain parties to attract public attention. Consequently, media can also potentially harm the interests of specific groups (Sri Choiriyati, 2015). Therefore, the role of mass media in shaping public opinion is highly important. Mass media has the capacity to influence public attitudes and perceptions of various events and occurrences. In this process, media serves as the primary source of information for society by providing news and information on various topics, such as politics, economics, social issues, culture, and other matters.

The information presented by the media shapes public perception and understanding of an issue and can influence public policy. Thus, it is crucial for mass media to uphold the principles of objectivity and neutrality in delivering information to maintain democratic balance and serve the broader interests of society.

Research Methodology

The research methodology used in this study is qualitative descriptive research. Qualitative research aims to understand the phenomena experienced by the subjects and then

describe them linguistically within the context of a natural environment. Sugiyono (2017) defines qualitative research as a method used to investigate the condition of an object naturally, where the researcher serves as the key instrument until the research findings provide significant meaning.

By using the qualitative descriptive method, the researcher seeks to explore and analyze in depth the phenomenon related to the role of mass media in politics and the formation of public opinion after the 2024 elections. This approach is expected to provide a deep and comprehensive understanding of how the media influences public opinion following the electoral process.

The method used in this research is library research, in which the researcher utilizes various theories obtained from analyzing journals, articles, and books relevant to this study to gain a deeper understanding. Library research is categorized as a theoretical study that refers to references and literature related to culture, values, and norms that develop within the research context (Sugiyono, 2017).

By applying the library research method, this study aims to build a strong theoretical foundation to clarify the context of the role of mass media in politics and the formation of public opinion. Library research serves as an instrument that strengthens ideas through theories with high levels of validity and accuracy in data analysis.

According to Zed (in Fadli, 2021), there are four phases in conducting library research: preparing research tools, collecting relevant references, systematically managing research time, and reading and taking notes on research materials. In this study, information sources are collected through literature review, including references from books, scientific journals, academic studies, research reports, official government or institutional documents, as well as digital sources or other online literature.

Results and Discussion

The Influence of Media in Politics

The influence of media in politics is immense. The media plays a crucial role in reaching a broad spectrum of individuals and shaping their political behavior. Moreover, mass media can influence how individuals perceive political issues and construct their perspectives on the political world.

As an integral component of political communication, mass media functions to distribute political information, shape public opinion on political issues, and convey political messages from various parties to garner wider support. Mass media has key characteristics such as wide reach, diverse audiences, and the ability to deliver messages quickly and simultaneously, making it a communication tool that attracts attention from various groups.

The power of mass media in shaping political issues cannot be overlooked, and every message conveyed is inseparable from the identity and interests of the media institution itself (Choiriyati, 2015). In practice, mass communication occurs through the interaction between state interests, the market, certain elites, and the mass media itself.

The Role of Mass Media in Political Communication and Public Opinion Formation

Democracy is essentially a form of government by the people. According to Adam Przeworski, establishing democracy means institutionalizing uncertainty and prioritizing the interests of all people over that uncertainty. Samuel P. Huntington (in Aridho et al., 2024) defines three main conditions for the democratization process: the end of an authoritarian regime, the establishment of a democratic regime, and the consolidation of the democratic regime. Meanwhile, Georg Sørensen states that the transition to democracy consists of three stages: preparation, decision, and consolidation. The preparation stage is marked by political struggles to overthrow a non-democratic regime, the decision stage involves the formation of democratic elements, and the consolidation stage encompasses the development of a new democracy until it becomes part of a country's political culture.

Politics and mass media share a close relationship because one of the primary objectives of mass media is to shape public opinion, particularly in the political domain. The success of mass media is often measured by the extent to which it can influence public opinion according to the media's agenda. There is a mutual dependency between the political world and mass media, where both influence and rely on each other. Mass media has a strong persuasive role in shaping public views on emerging political issues.

According to Merrill and Lowenstein (in Aridho et al., 2024), mass media, such as newspapers, are tied to the press system, which in turn is closely related to the prevailing political system. Consequently, newspapers must comply with established regulations when delivering information to the public. Mass media has become an inseparable part of globalization, no longer limited by territorial boundaries or the laws of a single country (Spark, 2000; Chan, 2001, in Aridho et al., 2024). With technological advancements and modernization, mass media continues to evolve and is now divided into two main categories: print media and electronic media.

Particularly in the Reform Era, Nurul Shoba emphasized the significant influence of mass media on public perceptions and political behavior. The dissemination of information by mass media reflects political changes and freedom of speech, ultimately affecting public political behavior. In simple terms, mass media plays a vital role in the political sphere by spreading political messages, shaping public opinion on various political issues, and mobilizing public support for specific political objectives.

Mass media conveys various interests through its content to attract public attention and influence their attitudes (Choiriyati, 2015). Each media outlet has its own editorial policies, depending on the political news content it wishes to present, making it a frequent target of various political parties' interests. Media coverage is generally linked to other media, forming an information chain that strengthens the influence of mass media in disseminating information to society (Choiriyati, 2015).

In politics, mass media is often used as a propaganda tool to gain power, aligning its interests with those of its owners. Media analysis theories, such as Structural Marxism, suggest that mass media is part of the state's ideological apparatus, closely linked to power. Media ownership by political elites makes it a propaganda tool for their political agendas. Mass media plays a central role in shaping public opinion because the information

it conveys influences social communication within society (Choiriyati, 2015). It enables individuals or specific groups to deliver messages, build images, and influence public perceptions of political figures through the information presented. To this day, mass media continues to have a significant impact on shaping public opinion.

The Impact of Social Media on Political Communication and Public Opinion in Elections

During elections, the evolution of social media technology has transformed the landscape of political communication. In today's digital era, political parties and candidates heavily rely on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube to engage with voters. This analysis examines the impact of social media on public opinion formation, political engagement, and political discourse to provide a comprehensive overview of its role in election dynamics.

As an open platform for society, social media serves as a medium for the exchange of diverse perspectives and opinions without limitations. During election campaigns, political issues, information dissemination, and opinion sharing are increasingly centered on social media. Several studies indicate that social media significantly influences public opinion formation (Aydil & Zuhri, 2023):

1. **The Popularity of Information on Social Media**
Information circulating on social media has the potential to spread rapidly and reach a broad audience. Popular or viral content—whether in the form of news, memes, or videos—can easily influence people's mindsets and opinions. Ultimately, this phenomenon affects individual political decisions, including candidate selection and issue comprehension.
2. **Filter Bubbles in Social Media**
Social media algorithms create a "filter bubble" effect, where users are only exposed to content that aligns with their preferences and viewpoints. This feature reinforces individuals' beliefs and potentially increases public opinion polarization.
3. **Increased Voter Participation**
Social media contributes to increased political participation. Political campaigns and movements often utilize these platforms to rally support, organize voter registration, raise funds, and encourage public involvement in elections.
4. **Direct Interaction Between Candidates and Voters**
Social media allows candidates to interact directly with voters. They can respond to questions, address public concerns, and engage in online discussions. This strengthens the relationship between candidates and voters while fostering greater personal involvement in the democratic process.

In the context of the 2024 election, social media technology advancements have become a significant factor in the political landscape, particularly in the post-election phase. Candidates and political parties are increasingly using social media as their primary tool to disseminate political messages.

Through engaging content such as videos, graphics, and text, candidates strive to reach a broad audience. Choosing the right social media platform is also a key strategy in targeting specific voter groups. Additionally, social media enables rapid responses to crises or controversies during campaigns, allowing candidates to manage their online image effectively.

However, the influence of social media in spreading information also presents various risks. One of the biggest challenges is the spread of fake news, which can distort public opinion. Moreover, social media contributes to increasing political polarization by forming online communities that only interact with individuals who share similar views, hindering cross-group dialogue.

Therefore, voters need to understand the role of social media in elections to recognize the challenges and opportunities arising from its use. While social media provides space for diverse opinions, the existence of filter bubbles can lead to opinion homogenization, where individuals only receive information that reinforces their beliefs without considering alternative viewpoints.

On the other hand, direct access to social media has improved election transparency by making it easier for voters to access information about candidates, policies, and programs. However, the dominance of social media in politics also raises ethical concerns, necessitating stricter regulations to ensure its responsible use.

To ensure that social media functions as a tool for supporting a healthy democracy, the following steps are necessary:

1. **Stricter Content Regulation**
Implementing stricter policies to control inaccurate, harmful, or misleading content to minimize the spread of fake news and misinformation.
2. **Strengthening Data Privacy and Security**
Enhancing data protection systems for voters and candidates to prevent online threats and information misuse.
3. **Transparency in Political Advertising**
Ensuring transparency in political advertisements so that voters can clearly understand the sources and objectives of campaign messages.
4. **Improving Media Literacy Among Voters**
Conducting media literacy training to enhance public understanding of political information circulating on social media.

The Impact of Political Communication and Public Opinion on Public Behavior

Political communication and public opinion significantly influence public behavior in political contexts. Below are some key effects of political communication on public political behavior:

1. **Formation of Political Attitudes**
Political communication through mass and social media plays a crucial role in shaping public political attitudes. Through news coverage, reports, and political analysis, people form opinions about political issues, candidates, and political parties.

For example, media that presents news neutrally or with bias toward a particular candidate or party can influence how the public evaluates them.

2. Voter Behavior

Political communication influences voter behavior in elections. Campaign messages conveyed by candidates and parties through political advertisements, public debates, and direct voter engagement can shape voter decisions. Moreover, mass media and social media play a role in providing information about candidates and political parties, affecting voter preferences.

3. Political Participation

Political communication can encourage public political participation. Political campaigns, calls to vote, and social or political movements mobilized through mass and social media can increase public involvement in political processes. Media enables individuals to share views, participate in political discussions, and engage in various political activities.

4. Public Opinion Polarization

Mass and social media can trigger opinion polarization. Due to its ability to provide access to diverse viewpoints, social media can create a "filter bubble" phenomenon, where individuals are only exposed to information that aligns with their existing opinions and preferences. This can strengthen existing beliefs and increase political polarization between different groups.

5. Spread of Fake News and Hoaxes

One of the main challenges in digital-era political communication is the spread of fake news and hoaxes. Inaccurate or misleading information can quickly spread through social networks and influence public opinion inaccurately. This can distort public understanding of political issues and lead to uninformed political decisions.

6. Political Transparency and Accountability

On the other hand, social media can also enhance political transparency by providing broader access to political information and activities. Voters can easily obtain information about candidates, political parties, and proposed policies. This has the potential to increase political leaders' accountability and help the public make more informed political decisions.

Political communication and public opinion significantly impact public behavior in political contexts. Through mass and social media, the public is influenced in shaping political attitudes, making election decisions, and participating in political activities. However, challenges such as fake news dissemination and opinion polarization must be addressed.

Therefore, transparency, media literacy, and ethical political communication are key factors in ensuring that media has a positive impact on society and strengthens a healthy democratic process. By understanding the role of social media in elections, society can ensure that these platforms serve as tools for promoting a transparent, open, and fair

democracy. With proper regulation and increased public awareness, social media can be a positive force in building a strong democratic process.

Conclusion

Based on the results and discussions presented earlier, the role of mass media in politics is highly significant. Mass media has the advantage of reaching a wide audience and aims to influence the political behavior of society. The benchmark for a media's success can be seen in how effectively it shapes public opinion. In the political sphere, mass media often highlights political issues that are used as propaganda tools to serve the interests of political elites or media owners. The primary goal of this practice is to build a positive image and maintain power. The relationship between mass media and politics is interdependent, where both benefit by influencing public opinion.

In the context of the 2024 elections, mass media has once again become a focal point due to the extensive coverage of candidates who will continue Indonesia's leadership. The information received by the public varies greatly, depending on how each media outlet presents it. However, the tendency of mass media to be non-neutral has become more apparent, as many media owners have affiliations with certain political groups. As a result, some media outlets show favoritism toward specific candidates, leading to biased and non-objective reporting.

This media bias certainly benefits political elites and media owners, but not all members of society are aware of this partiality in news coverage. This situation has the potential to sway public opinion toward supporting certain candidates without considering a broader perspective. Therefore, mass media continues to have a significant influence in shaping public opinion. By considering the role of mass media in shaping public opinion, the dynamics of the 2024 elections, and its influence on society, it can be concluded that both mass media and social media play a crucial role in political communication and public opinion formation. Through these media channels, political messages can be conveyed to a broad audience, shaping their perceptions of political issues, candidates, and political parties.

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