



# Technology and Social Media in Democratic Participation in Indonesia

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## Abstract

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This study examines the role of technology and social media in strengthening public participation in Indonesia's democratic process. Using a library research method, it analyzes several scholarly articles published between last five years focusing on digital democracy, political participation, and the positive and negative impacts of social media. The findings reveal that social media serves as a crucial medium to expand access to political information, enhance youth involvement, and reinforce governmental transparency and accountability. Nevertheless, significant challenges persist, including the spread of misinformation, political polarization, hate speech, and threats to data privacy. Furthermore, the digital divide across regions poses risks of unequal participation. The study concludes that optimizing digital democracy requires stronger digital literacy, adaptive regulations, and multi-stakeholder collaboration. With these strategies, social media can function not only as a space for participation but also as a driver for an inclusive and sustainable democracy in Indonesia.

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## 1. Introduction

The development of information technology and social media in the last two decades has brought fundamental changes in social and political life in Indonesia. With the number of internet users continuing to increase, Indonesia is now one of the countries with the highest social media penetration rate in the world. According to a report by the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (*Asosiasi Penyelenggara Jasa Internet Indonesia/ APJII*), more than 210 million Indonesians use the internet in 2022, and most of them are active on social media platforms. This condition makes social media a new arena for social interaction, information dissemination, and political participation. This change shows that democracy in Indonesia does not only run in formal spaces such as elections or parliaments, but also takes place actively in the digital space. Digital technology and social media have opened up much wider access to political information than ever before. People can get the latest news, public policies, and political opinions from various sources just by using a smartphone.

Research by Fitriani et al.<sup>1</sup> confirms that social media not only provides a space for communication, but also expands access to public participation so that previously underrepresented community groups can now be more active in expressing their aspirations. This shows a shift in democracy towards a more inclusive and digital technology-based form. On the other hand, social media also encourages faster and more massive political mobilization. Political parties,

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<sup>1</sup> Deti Fitriani, Yeni Budiyani, Adinda Rahayu Hardika, and Mita Choerunissa. "Public participation in the democratic process in Indonesia: an analysis of the role of technology and social media." *Advances In Social Humanities Research* 1, no. 4 (2023): 362-371.

candidates, and civil society organizations use digital platforms to spread political messages, organize campaigns, and rally support from the wider community. Research by Saud and Margono<sup>2</sup> found that social media plays a central role in increasing the political participation of the younger generation in Indonesia. This generation, as the main users of digital media, is actively involved in public discussions, online campaigns, and social movements that strengthen the dynamics of digital democracy. This marks a shift in the pattern of political participation from mere physical presence in formal forums to intense engagement in cyberspace.

However, this development is inseparable from serious challenges. The spread of misinformation, hate speech, and political polarization are phenomena that often color the digital space. Hafel<sup>3</sup> emphasized that the rise of disinformation on social media can weaken the quality of democracy by creating false public perceptions, lowering trust in political institutions, and strengthening social conflicts. This situation shows a paradox: on the one hand social media strengthens democracy by opening up space for participation, but on the other hand it has the potential to weaken it if it is not managed wisely. Furthermore, the pattern of public participation in digital democracy is also influenced by the level of digital literacy. Low digital literacy makes some people vulnerable to political provocation and manipulation.

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<sup>2</sup> Muhammad Saud and Hendro Margono. "Indonesia's rise in digital democracy and youth's political participation." *Journal of Information Technology & Politics* 18, no. 4 (2021): 443-454.

<sup>3</sup> Muhlis Hafel. "Digital transformation in politics and governance in Indonesia: Opportunities and challenges in the era of technological disruption." *Society* 11, no. 2 (2023): 742-757.

Research by Yue et al.<sup>4</sup> shows that a lack of critical understanding of digital information encourages the formation of “echo chambers” and exacerbates political polarization. Therefore, digital literacy is one of the important keys in ensuring that the use of technology and social media can contribute positively to democracy in Indonesia. In addition, social media also has great potential to encourage transparency and government accountability. Ida et al.<sup>5</sup> notes that people use social media as a means to monitor government actions, report violations, and demand public accountability. Pressure from public opinion in the digital space often forces governments to be more responsive and transparent in carrying out their duties. Thus, social media functions as an instrument of supervision as well as a mechanism of public participation that strengthens democratic principles.

Based on the description above, it is clear that the role of technology and social media in Indonesian democracy is ambivalent: it presents opportunities as well as challenges. Therefore, this research focuses on three main objectives: first, to explain how technology and social media encourage public participation in democratic processes; second, identify the positive and negative impacts of this phenomenon; and third, providing recommendations for strategies for optimizing the use of digital technology so that community participation takes place in a healthy, inclusive, and constructive manner. With a literature study approach, this research is

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<sup>4</sup> Audrey Yue, Elmie Nekmat, and Annisa R. Beta. "Digital literacy through digital citizenship: Online civic participation and public opinion evaluation of youth minorities in Southeast Asia." *Media and Communication* 7, no. 2 (2019): 100-114.

<sup>5</sup> Rachmah Ida, Muhammad Saud, and Musta'in Mashud. "Persistence of social media on political activism and engagement among Indonesian and Pakistani youths." *International Journal of Web Based Communities* 16, no. 4 (2020): 378-395.

expected to enrich the academic discourse on digital democracy while providing practical recommendations for stakeholders in Indonesia.

## **2. Literature Review**

The study of the role of technology and social media in Indonesian democracy shows complex dynamics. A number of studies underline that social media serves as an important means in expanding people's political participation, especially the younger generation. Fernandez<sup>6</sup> emphasized that social media is not only a medium of communication, but also opens up a more inclusive space of representation for people who were previously not adequately accommodated in formal politics. Through digital platforms, citizens can voice their aspirations, participate in public discussions, and be involved in political decision-making. Other research highlights aspects of political mobilization resulting from the use of social media. Priatama et al.<sup>7</sup> show that the political participation of the younger generation is increasing along with the high penetration of social media in Indonesia. Political activism that takes place in the digital space, such as online campaigns or hashtag-based social movements, shows that social media is able to change the pattern of political participation from a traditional form to a more interactive and massive one. This is in line with the global phenomenon where social media is increasingly considered as a new space for deliberative democracy.

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<sup>6</sup> Stephen Fernandez. "Making space in higher education: disability, digital technology, and the inclusive prospect of digital collaborative making." *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 25, no. 12 (2021): 1375-1390.

<sup>7</sup> Rista Ardy Priatama, Kenichiro Onitsuka, Ernan Rustiadi, and Satoshi Hoshino. "Social interaction of Indonesian rural youths in the internet age." *Sustainability* 12, no. 1 (2019): 115.

However, social media also presents a number of challenges. McKay and Tenove<sup>8</sup> emphasized that the spread of misinformation and disinformation in the digital space has the potential to weaken the quality of democracy by reducing public trust and strengthening political polarization. Low digital literacy worsens these conditions, turning social media into an arena for conflict and hate speech. While technology and social media broaden political participation in Indonesia, challenges of misinformation, polarization, and weak literacy remain pressing. Thus, there is a research gap that calls for deeper study on strategies to optimize social media use so digital democracy can develop more inclusively and sustainably.

### 3. Methods

This study uses the library research approach as the main method. The literature study was chosen because the purpose of this research is to analyze the role of technology and social media in public participation in the democratic process in Indonesia by utilizing various available scientific sources. This method allows researchers to collect, review, and synthesize findings from previous research, so as to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of digital democracy in Indonesia. The data collection process is carried out by searching through scientific articles published in national and international journals indexed in Google Scholar, with a publication time limit between the last five years.

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<sup>8</sup> Spencer McKay and Chris Tenove. "Disinformation as a threat to deliberative democracy." *Political research quarterly* 74, no. 3 (2021): 703-717.

This limit is set so that the references used are up-to-date and relevant to the latest developments in digital technology and social media. From the search results, several main articles were obtained that discussed related topics, ranging from the role of social media in increasing political participation, positive and negative impacts on democracy, to challenges such as misinformation, polarization, and low digital literacy. The analysis stage is carried out through content analysis by grouping the main themes that emerge from the literature. These themes include: (1) the role of social media in expanding access to political information and increasing public participation; (2) the potential of social media in encouraging government transparency and accountability; (3) political mobilization of the younger generation through the digital space; and (4) the negative impact of social media use, such as misinformation, hate speech, and polarization. By organizing the literature based on these themes, this research can map the opportunities as well as challenges of social media in the context of democracy in Indonesia.

In addition, in the study process, the researcher also conducts a critical evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of each study studied. For example, some studies provide an optimistic picture of the role of social media in strengthening democracy, but pay less attention to the risks that arise. On the other hand, there are also studies that overemphasize the negative aspects without including clear mitigation strategies. By comparing the two sides, this study seeks to produce a more balanced analysis. The validity of this literature study research is obtained through a strict selection of reference sources, ensuring that only scientific articles are relevant, reliable, and in accordance with the topic used. Thus, the results of the analysis are

expected to not only provide academic contributions, but also practical, especially in providing recommendations on strategies for optimizing the use of technology and social media to strengthen a healthy, inclusive, and sustainable democracy in Indonesia.

## **4. Results**

### **4.1. The Role of Technology and Social Media in Expanding Political Participation**

The development of digital technology and social media in Indonesia has expanded people's political participation in an unprecedented way. Social media allows people to access political information more quickly, share views, and interact directly with political actors. This phenomenon creates a new public space where democracy takes place in a more fluid, interactive, and open form. Fitriani et al.<sup>9</sup> emphasized that social media provides a wider communication space for the public, especially groups that were previously underrepresented in the formal political system. Public participation is no longer limited to elections or official forums, but also takes place in the digital space through online discussions, comments, and campaigns.

In addition to expanding the space for participation, social media also increases the intensity of the involvement of the younger generation. Saud and

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<sup>9</sup> Deti Fitriani, Yeni Budiyani, Adinda Rahayu Hardika, and Mita Choerunissa. "Public participation in the democratic process in Indonesia: an analysis of the role of technology and social media." *Advances In Social Humanities Research* 1, no. 4 (2023): 362-371.

Margono<sup>10</sup> noted that the young generation in Indonesia uses social media to voice their political aspirations, participate in social movements, and form more dynamic public opinion. This engagement is important because it marks a shift in the pattern of political participation, from traditional to a more inclusive form of digital participation. In other words, social media functions as an instrument that lowers barriers to participation, both geographical and social barriers.

Other research has also shown that social media contributes to creating higher political awareness. Amin et al.<sup>11</sup> stated that the use of digital technology can increase public involvement in public issues by providing an open and direct discussion space. This shows that people's participation in democracy is no longer limited to urban areas, but also reaches people in remote areas. Thus, social media has the potential to expand the reach of political participation nationally. In addition, the transparency aspect is also an important part of expanding participation. According to Ida et al.<sup>12</sup>, social media serves as a means for the public to monitor government performance, voice criticism, and demand accountability. When people can easily express criticism or protest through digital platforms, this forces the government to be more responsive to public needs. The transparency born of digital openness ultimately strengthens the principles of democracy.

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<sup>10</sup> Muhammad Saud and Hendro Margono. "Indonesia's rise in digital democracy and youth's political participation." *Journal of Information Technology & Politics* 18, no. 4 (2021): 443-454.

<sup>11</sup> Fakhry Amin, Silkania Swarizona, Trihadi Kuncahyo, Yasser Arafat, and Riesta Ayu Oktarina. "Digital Democracy Political Participation Through Technology in the Modern Era." *Int. J. Sci. Soc* 5 (2023): 291-301.

<sup>12</sup> Rachmah Ida, Muhammad Saud, and Musta'in Mashud. "Persistence of social media on political activism and engagement among Indonesian and Pakistani youths." *International Journal of Web Based Communities* 16, no. 4 (2020): 378-395.

Furthermore, Jandevi<sup>13</sup> shows that new media is not only a means of communication, but also a catalyst in increasing public involvement on political issues. Digital media accelerates the process of disseminating information and allows for real-time cross-group discussions. This phenomenon makes political participation more accessible and more massive compared to the era before digitalization. Findings from various studies show that technology and social media have changed the face of democracy in Indonesia. Community participation is getting wider, access to information is getting easier, and the involvement of the younger generation is getting more prominent. However, this expansion of participation still presents challenges that will be discussed further in the next sub-chapter.

#### **4.2. The Negative Impact of Technology and Social Media on Democracy**

While technology and social media provide great opportunities for people's political participation, they also present significant negative impacts on the quality of democracy in Indonesia. One of the main problems is the spread of misinformation and disinformation. Hafel<sup>14</sup> emphasized that the rise of fake news on social media causes public confusion, damages the quality of political discussions, and weakens public trust in democratic institutions. This phenomenon not only affects public opinion individually, but also reinforces political polarization at the societal level.

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<sup>13</sup> Uspal Jandevi. "New media for increasing political participation in Indonesia." *ijcs* 1 (2019): 19.

<sup>14</sup> Muhlis Hafel. "Digital transformation in politics and governance in Indonesia: Opportunities and challenges in the era of technological disruption." *Society* 11, no. 2 (2023): 742-757.

The polarization amplified by social media occurs due to the existence of an "echo chamber" and platform algorithms that tend to show content according to user preferences. Yue et al.<sup>15</sup> found that low digital literacy encourages people to be trapped in echo chambers that reinforce one-sided views. This condition is dangerous because it hinders cross-group dialogue and lowers the quality of public deliberations that are the foundation of democracy. In other words, social media, which should be an inclusive space, can actually narrow the space for healthy dialogue.

In addition, hate speech and intolerance are also prominent negative impacts. Azkiya et al.<sup>16</sup> show that the intensity of political debate on social media often develops into personal attacks, hate speech, and even provocations that have the potential to divide society. In this context, social media not only fails to support deliberative democracy, but it can also exacerbate social and political tensions. Another factor that is no less important is the threat to data privacy and security. Anggraheni et al.<sup>17</sup> revealed that the practice of collecting personal data by digital platforms can be misused for political purposes, including manipulation of voter behavior. This kind of case shows that digital political participation does not always take place safely, but is vulnerable to exploitation by parties with certain political

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<sup>15</sup> Audrey Yue, Elmic Nekmat, and Annisa R. Beta. "Digital literacy through digital citizenship: Online civic participation and public opinion evaluation of youth minorities in Southeast Asia." *Media and Communication* 7, no. 2 (2019): 100-114.

<sup>16</sup> Nafita Rizqiyatul Azkiya, Jonni Mahroza, Agung Rishdianto, and Hikmat Zakky Almubaroq. "Analysis of the impact of social media on the political participation of Indonesian youth in the perspective of defense management." *NUSANTARA: Jurnal Ilmu Pengetahuan Sosial* 10, no. 7 (2023): 3533-3545.

<sup>17</sup> Palupi Anggraheni, Novi Tri Setyowati, and Harry Harry. "Social media and political participation in indonesia: restrictions access at announcement results of 2019 presidential election." *Aspiration Journal* 2, no. 1 (2021): 99-128.

interests. This raises big questions about the protection of privacy rights in digital democracy.

Furthermore, Aziz and Hasna<sup>18</sup> highlight the potential for exclusivity in digital democracy. While technology can expand participation, the digital divide remains a problem. People in rural areas with limited internet access often lag behind in obtaining information and opportunities to participate. As a result, digital democracy risks creating new inequalities between groups that have access to technology and those that do not. Thus, while technology and social media provide a wide space for participation, the negative impacts of misinformation, polarization, hate speech, privacy threats, and digital divides are serious challenges. This challenge underscores the need for strategies to strengthen digital literacy, effective regulation, and collaboration between governments, civil society, and platform providers to ensure social media functions as an instrument of healthy democracy.

### **4.3. Strategy to Optimize the Role of Technology and Social Media in Indonesian Democracy**

To maximize the potential of technology and social media in strengthening democracy, an optimization strategy is needed that includes digital literacy, effective regulation, and multi-stakeholder collaboration. One of the main strategies is to increase digital literacy among the community. Yue et al.<sup>19</sup> emphasized that digital

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<sup>18</sup> Muhammad Saiful Aziz and Sofia Hasna. "The problem of e-democracy and its impact on political participation in Indonesia." In *6th International Conference on Social and Political Sciences (ICOSAPS 2020)*, Atlantis Press, (2020): 470-476.

<sup>19</sup> Audrey Yue, Elmie Nekmat, and Annisa R. Beta. "Digital literacy through digital citizenship: Online civic participation and public opinion evaluation of youth minorities in Southeast Asia." *Media and Communication* 7, no. 2 (2019): 100-114.

literacy plays an important role in helping people sort through valid information, understand content critically, and avoid misinformation traps. Without adequate digital literacy, people will be vulnerable to political manipulation through social media. Therefore, formal and non-formal education programs that emphasize digital literacy need to be systematically expanded. In addition to literacy, transparency and accountability must also be the main pillars in optimizing the role of social media. Ida et al.<sup>20</sup> stated that social media can be used as a tool to strengthen public supervision of the government, but clear regulations are needed to keep the use of this media healthy. Regulations should not only suppress the spread of negative content, but also protect users' freedom of expression and privacy rights. In other words, optimization strategies need to find a balance between digital freedom and constructive social control.

Another strategy is to encourage the involvement of the younger generation more actively through digital technology. Priatama et al.<sup>21</sup> show that the younger generation has great potential in mobilizing political participation through social media. With their capacity as digital natives, this generation can be agents of change in fostering a more participatory and inclusive democracy. Support for the digital activism of the younger generation needs to be realized through a more open platform and a participatory space that is responsive to their aspirations. In addition, the development of digital platforms that support public deliberation is very

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<sup>20</sup> Rachmah Ida, Muhammad Saud, and Musta'in Mashud. "Persistence of social media on political activism and engagement among Indonesian and Pakistani youths." *International Journal of Web Based Communities* 16, no. 4 (2020): 378-395.

<sup>21</sup> Rista Ardy Priatama, Kenichiro Onitsuka, Ernan Rustiadi, and Satoshi Hoshino. "Social interaction of Indonesian rural youths in the internet age." *Sustainability* 12, no. 1 (2019): 115.

important. Amin et al.<sup>22</sup> emphasized that technology should be geared towards creating a healthy and productive discussion space, not just a polarizing space. This can be realized through digital consultation platforms or participatory applications that allow the public to provide input on public policies. Thus, digital democracy can evolve in a substantial deliberative direction, not just symbolic participation.

Furthermore, Fernandez<sup>23</sup> emphasized the importance of collaboration between the government, non-governmental organizations, and social media platform providers. This collaboration can strengthen oversight mechanisms, address negative content, and create policies that support healthy digital participation. Through multi-stakeholder synergy, challenges such as misinformation, hate speech, and the digital divide can be addressed more effectively. With these strategies, the role of technology and social media in Indonesian democracy can be optimized so that it not only becomes a wide space for participation, but also healthy, inclusive, and sustainable. This optimization is not just the government's task, but the shared responsibility of all stakeholders to ensure that digital democracy develops in a constructive direction.

## 5. Discussion

The results of this study show that the role of technology and social media in Indonesian democracy is ambivalent: on the one hand it expands political

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<sup>22</sup> Fakhry Amin, Silkania Swarizona, Trihadi Kuncahyo, Yasser Arafat, and Riesta Ayu Oktarina. "Digital Democracy Political Participation Through Technology in the Modern Era." *Int. J. Sci. Soc* 5 (2023): 291-301.

<sup>23</sup> Stephen Fernandez. "Making space in higher education: disability, digital technology, and the inclusive prospect of digital collaborative making." *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 25, no. 12 (2021): 1375-1390.

participation, but on the other hand presents complex challenges. The literature studied shows a shift in the pattern of community participation from the physical space to the digital space. This shift not only affects how citizens access information, but also how they engage in the political process. Fitriani et al.<sup>24</sup> emphasized that social media is able to create a new and more inclusive space for participation, so that previously marginalized community groups can voice their aspirations. Thus, technology serves as an instrument of democratization that expands access and political representation.

However, these findings also show that digital democracy in Indonesia faces serious problems in the form of misinformation, polarization, and hate speech. These challenges not only weaken the quality of democracy, but also threaten the social cohesion of society. McKay and Tenove<sup>25</sup> underlined that the rise of misinformation on social media contributes to the decline of public trust in political institutions and the government. As a result, the digital space that should be an arena for public deliberation has turned into an arena of conflict and social fragmentation. This shows that social media does not automatically strengthen democracy, but rather requires regulation, digital literacy, and collective awareness to prevent its negative impacts.

In addition to internal challenges, digital democracy in Indonesia is also influenced by external contexts in the form of digital gaps between regions. The

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<sup>24</sup> Deti Fitriani, Yeni Budiyan, Adinda Rahayu Hardika, and Mita Choerunissa. "Public participation in the democratic process in Indonesia: an analysis of the role of technology and social media." *Advances In Social Humanities Research* 1, no. 4 (2023): 362-371.

<sup>25</sup> Spencer McKay and Chris Tenove. "Disinformation as a threat to deliberative democracy." *Political research quarterly* 74, no. 3 (2021): 703-717.

inequality of internet access between urban and rural areas poses a risk of political exclusion for certain groups of people. This situation raises the question of whether digital democracy is really capable of delivering equal political participation. As Saud and Margono<sup>26</sup> emphasize, young people in urban areas are more active in using social media for political participation compared to those living in remote areas. This condition shows that although social media is expanding participation, unequal access remains an obstacle that must be overcome. This discussion shows that optimizing the role of technology and social media in Indonesian democracy must be carried out through a multi-stakeholder approach. Governments, civil society, digital platform providers, and the wider community must work together to create a healthy digital space.

Digital literacy is the main foundation, but without clear regulatory support and collective commitment, it is difficult to achieve maximum results. In addition, it is also necessary to develop a digital platform that is able to facilitate constructive public deliberation, not just a fragmented space for the exchange of opinions. Considering the findings and literature discussions, it is clear that the future of Indonesian democracy in the digital era is largely determined by how this nation is able to manage technology and social media. If optimization is carried out comprehensively, social media can serve as a democratization instrument that strengthens participation, transparency, and accountability. However, if the negative challenges are ignored, social media has the potential to weaken the foundations of

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<sup>26</sup> Muhammad Saud and Hendro Margono. "Indonesia's rise in digital democracy and youth's political participation." *Journal of Information Technology & Politics* 18, no. 4 (2021): 443-454.

democracy by exacerbating polarization and degrading the quality of public dialogue. Therefore, digital democracy in Indonesia requires a balance between freedom of expression, critical literacy, and adaptive regulation in order to develop in an inclusive and sustainable direction.

## **6. Conclusion**

This research shows that technology and social media have a very significant role in shaping the pattern of political participation of people in Indonesia. The presence of social media has expanded the space for public participation, increased access to political information, and opened up wider opportunities for the younger generation to be involved in the democratic process. Social media also functions as an instrument of transparency and accountability, where people can monitor government performance and voice aspirations more directly. However, this study also confirms that there are major challenges that cannot be ignored. The spread of misinformation, political polarization, hate speech, and threats to data privacy are factors that can weaken the quality of digital democracy.

In addition, the digital divide between regions has the potential to create new inequalities in political participation. Therefore, optimizing the role of technology and social media must be carried out comprehensively through increasing digital literacy, effective regulation, and multi-stakeholder collaboration between governments, civil society, and platform providers. With the right strategy, social media can function not only as a space for participation, but also as a driving force for a healthier, inclusive, and more sustainable democracy in Indonesia.

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