

STUDENT PERCEPTION TOWARD 'RELIGIOUS VALUE FANATICISM' IN SOCIAL MEDIA DURING INDONESIA'S PRE-CAMPAIGN PERIOD OF PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION 2019¹

Kurnia Arofah ²

Department of Communication Science, University of Pembangunan Nasional
"Veteran" Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Reza Prima Yanti

Department of International Relations, University Of Pembangunan Nasional
"Veteran" Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Abstract

Fanatic defined as an adjective to describe action characterized by an excessive enthusiasm and often marked by intense fidelity. Although fanaticism is not always negative, fanaticism generally accused as the cause of bad things that arises because of an excessive enthusiasm, that remove someone rationality. Fanaticism toward politics and religion is the most common kind of fanatic we often met. With the existence of social media, fanaticisms toward religious value become easier to spread in Indonesia, especially before the election 2019 period. In the upcoming Presidential election 2019, all president candidates only have sixth month period of campaign started from end of September 2018 until first week of April. However, long before the campaign period started, the social media already filled up with explicit or implicit campaign from each candidate's supporters.

This research aims to: 1) Describe fanaticism toward religious value that posted in social media six month before presidential election 2019 campaign Indonesia started since April to October 2019 and; 2) Describe the perception of student toward religious value that posted in social media. This research uses descriptive qualitative method. Secondary data collected from social media in Indonesia on April to early September 2019. While primary data collected through Focus Group Discussion with two group of student of UPN "Veteran" Yogyakarta. Each group consists of 25-selected student who will elect president for the first time in their life.

Result from the research shows: 1) There are many posts in social media related to fanaticism toward religious value linked to presidential candidacy during six-month period of pre-campaign. Characteristic of fanatics' could be seen from the traits such as denying the facts, avoiding critical thinking that based on facts, and considering the opponent as rival with bad attitude that has to be overthrown. These could be seen from the posts in social media such as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram related to issues such as National Polices Mobile Brigade headquarters (*Mako Brimob*) Riot in April, Suicide bombing in Surabaya church in May, and the registration of president and vice president candidacy in July until September 2019.; 2) Most of students are avid social media user with average 7 hour per day to access social media. All of the student admit that they often saw posts that could categorized as fanatic toward religious value in social media during pre –campaign period. Most of students perceive that these kinds of post

¹ Financial support for this research is provided by Institute of Research and Community of University of Pembangunan Nasional "Veteran" Yogyakarta

² Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Kurnia Arofah, Department of Communication Science, University of Pembangunan Nasional "Veteran" Yogyakarta. Contact: kurnia.arofah@upnyk.ac.id

are irrational because it is fragmenting and pitting the society against each other. Some of them realize that those kinds of posts were intentionally set to drop certain political group. While some student did not care at all, some are understand that this kind of phenomenon could happen because majority of Indonesian is religious. Most of student feels distracted and disturbed by fanatic toward religious value posting related to presidential election because it will affect the nationhood and nationalism, because they perceive that Indonesia is a diverse nation with various citizen's background. While others says that fanatic toward religious value is free to posts in social media as long as it did not disturb or forcing other people to have the same idea or believes, and it will not affect their decision in selecting the president candidate in 2019

Keywords: fanaticism, religious value fanaticism, presidential election, social media, pre-campaign period

Introduction

The attitude of liking or hating something is natural in human life. The like or love for something, sometimes causes extraordinary attraction which further could create fanatic and fanaticism. Based on the definition of Merriam Webster's dictionary, fanatics interpreted as adjectives to describe actions characterized by excessive enthusiasm and often characterized by intense loyalty.

One of the factors that make fanaticism become universal is its nature that closely related to human nature, so it can be found in almost all activities involving humans. Fanaticism towards politics and religion is the type of fanaticism most common (Marimaa, 2011). Although fanaticism does not always lead to negativity, it generally accused of being the cause of bad things that arise because of excessive enthusiasm that eliminating the rationality possessed by someone.

Fanaticism can arise starting from one's belief in anything that then turns into dogmatic. This dogmatism arises when someone follows or describes a doctrine without wanting to accept criticism at all, to cover up the factual diversity of interpretations. In the end, this dogmatic attitude of fanaticism would further give birth to extremism, radicalism, and fundamentalism as sources of violence.

Violence related to religion is common in various parts of the world. Even Habermas (2006) said that religion indeed very often locked in a national conflict or ethnic conflict. The same thing happened in Indonesia. According to Budiman (1990), if a pattern made, since Indonesia's independence, so much violence, or chaos happen based on a strong blend of religious, ethnic, and economic dimensions. Furthermore, Budiman also said that in practice, interfaith relations in Indonesia still overshadowed by four main obstacles. The first obstacle is prejudice. The second obstacle is secularism. The third obstacle is fundamentalism. Fourth and the last is communalism. Communalism is a notion or ideology that emphasizes group or togetherness in groups. Communalism also interpreted as loyalty to certain religious or ethnic groupings.

Communalism caused by fanaticism towards certain religious values is not always a bad thing. Some people argue that to be religious people have to be fanatic; because religion disseminated through fanaticism of its adherents. However, in a pluralistic environment,

communalism caused by fanaticism is dangerous.

In Indonesia, polarization between minorities and the majority based on ideological, ethnic, or certain religious fanaticism began to form because of this communalism. Communalism is certainly not new. As social beings, it is only natural that humans want to group or join with people who have the same likes, understandings, and ideologies. It is common for our community to join certain communities or groups. However, along with the progress of the development of information and communication technology, the groupings based on certain fanaticism increasingly have a large space.

In the era before the development of the Internet, especially social media, the public did not have much access to the same thoughts in various parts of the world. With the existence of social media, people become aware that there are so many people who turn out to have the same understanding with them, both just opinions, to religiosity and fanaticism towards religiosity.

Social media is a place where people feel they can freely express themselves and then find out that they are not alone. Whillock (2000) said that through the Internet, people who had felt alienated and felt they had no place in the community then realized that they had a colleague. This sense of similarity then leads to togetherness or communalism that makes the fanaticism that was previously impossible to spread then facilitated and expanded across time and space.

Currently, on Indonesia social media such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, certain group accounts including religious-themed personal accounts emerged. Whether it is only to spread information, to indoctrination even spread hatred. With its essentially interactive nature, social media provides a public space for people to express their opinions. Social media then became a forum that accommodated community discussions on certain values including religious values.

However, the war of comments and arguments, which ultimately divide the community into polarization of certain fanaticism including fanaticism towards religious values, wherever, and whatever social media forums are available are happens. These divisions in social media can cause or caused by fragmentation in the real world. With this fragmentation, the value of the nation owned by the people in a country is disrupting.

Sometimes, the values that construct a nation will tested when facing political and economic interests, especially ahead of the presidential election. The religious values that often become a package with matters of ethnic and political conflict often misused. These religious values, based on fanaticism, are what we are now seeing more often in all practices of social media use in Indonesia especially before the 2019 election.

In the upcoming elections in 2019, presidential candidates are only given time to campaign for 6 months, from October 2018 to April 2019. However, since the past 6 month, from April to October 2018, in the pre campaign period, Indonesian have been disgusted with political practices that have lately been laden with religious fanaticism sentiments mostly in social media. Most of social media used by first or second years collage student who will participate in the presidential election for the first time in their life. Various posts about politics attached with religious fanaticism value might or not change their perception toward politic or religion

fanaticism in Indonesian. This research aims to: 1) Describe fanaticism toward religious value that posted in social media six month before presidential election 2019 campaign Indonesia started since April to October 2019 and; 2) Describe the perception of student toward religious value that posted in social media

Research Method

This study will use descriptive qualitative research methods. Qualitative methods are used because this method is seen by researchers to be used to see problems originating from natural backgrounds or experiences in society. Qualitative methods can be used if the problem is still dim and not yet known more clearly what is behind the data or conditions that are visible. Therefore researchers can do more in-depth digging of the data or events (Suryana, 2010).

Secondary data samples gathered by observing postings related to religious fanaticism value in political theme posts from social media in Indonesia since April to October 2018. While primary data collected from the result of Focus Group Discussion with two group of student of UPN “Veteran” Yogyakarta. Each group consists of 25-selected student who will elect Indonesian president and vice president for the first time in their life.

Research Findings and Discussion

Fanaticism of Religion Value in Social Media During Indonesia’s Pre-Campaign Period of Presidential Election 2019

Based on data collection that has been carried out since April to mid September 2018, ahead of the 2019 presidential election campaign, there have been many posts or uploads on social media that contain religious values fanaticism. In April and May 2018, Indonesia was shocked by two terrors events which were acts of violence indicated as being related to terrorism. First at terror at Mobile Brigade headquarters (*Mako Brimob*) Jakarta. There are 5 police and 1 terrorist killed in this incident.

The second incident was bomb terrorism that occurred at a church in Surabaya. This terrorist act claimed to be masterminded by the Jamaah Ansaarut Daulah (JAD) group and affiliated with ISIS killed 28 people and injured 57 others. Terror is a manifestation of radical actions stemming from extremism born from excessive fanaticism. At the time of the incident, there were many responses from the public on social media.

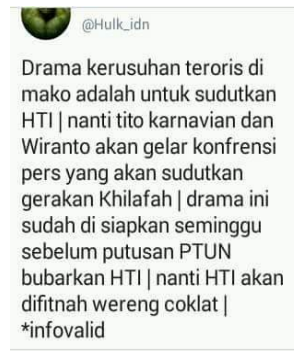


Figure 4.1. One of reaction sample in social media related to terror in Mako Brimob

Figure 4.1 is one example of many posts on social media stating that riots occurred in Mako Brimob were engineering carried out to corner HTI and there was involvement of government officials and officials to pitting Indonesian againts each other. This post says:

“Terrorist Chaos Drama in Mako made for cornering HTI. Tito Karnavian and Wiranto later will make a press conference which will cornering Khilafah movement. This Drama is already prepared a week before the supreme court decision to disband HTI. HTI will be defamed by wereng coklat”

When the terrorist incident in Mako Brimob was not finished, Indonesian social media was enlivened with posts related to bomb terror in Surabaya

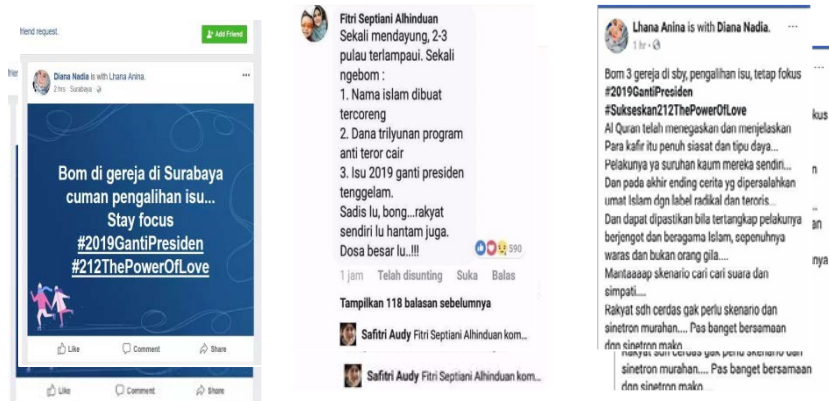


Figure 4.2 Some reaction posts samples in social media related to terror in Surabaya Church Bombing

Figure 4.2 are some examples of posts related to the Surabaya Bomb terror, which voicing fanaticism about religious values. Fanatic posts on religious values usually biasing the facts by stating that bombings are a transfer of issues and a government scenario to seek sympathy while tarnishing the name of Islam. Not to forget, the post also touched on the issue of presidential replacements in 2019. The post uploaded by Fitri Septiani Alhindun, was one of the fanaticism posts that ended in the arrest of the owner of the account. Fitri who is a teacher in West Kalimantan must end up in police custody because she was charged with the ITE Law article for doubting the facts that existed during the Surabaya bombing.

In June, posts on social media related to fanatical about religious values were reduced because the month of Ramadan. But the fanatic post towards religious values returned again in

July. In July and August, posts with #2019GantiPresiden and #Jokowi2Periode hashtags began to become more prevalent, especially after the registration of presidential candidates (*capres*) and vice-presidential candidates (*cawapres*) was closed and announced.



Figure 4.2. Some reaction posts samples in social media after presidential and vice presidential candidate is set

Figure 4.3 above is an example of a post on social media after the name of the presidential and vice presidential candidate is set. The KPU determined that there were two candidates and vice presidential candidates, namely Prabowo and Sandiaga Uno, and Joko Widodo and Ma'ruf Amin. In August the posts with fanaticism to religious value with the theme suggesting to avoid hypocritical clerics or Islamic haters as well as aware to modern communist party PKI circulating along with with #2019GantiPresiden hashtag.

Towards the middle of September, the Indonesian social media world was filled with more themes for the 2019 Asian Games held in Jakarta and Palembang, and posts related to the earthquake in Lombok.



Figure 4.2. Some reaction posts samples in social media in September before the Campaign Periode Begin

Figure 4.4 is a picture of posts on social media which are more enlivened by the tragedy of the earthquake in Lombok which killed hundreds of people. One of the lively posts is a post from jokowi's supporters which illustrates that there are many jokowi haters in Lombok who

turn around to love Jokowi after seeing Jokowi's obedience in worshipping and his sincerity when helping earthquake victims in Lombok. Afterward, many posts about 2019 Asian Games posted in social media where there were events when Jokowi and Prabowo embraced, accompanied by messages suggesting Indonesian should not easily pitted against each other.

If we mention the word fanaticism, most people might ask what makes someone fanatical. In fact, fanaticism is not just a strong commitment to worldview, ideology or a belief system. There are so many people who obey these things, for example being religious, believing in an ideology or belief without being fanatical. Generally, fanatical people are dogmatic people who believe that their own theory, ideology and the solution are the most correct and at the same time avoid critical thinking or can not see arguments, facts, or consequences from others that deny their solution (Calhoun, 2004).

Based on the observation, not all posts on social media during the pre-campaign period, are contains fanaticism towards religious values. However, some examples like those in Figure 4.1 and 4.2 are examples of posts that categorized as fanatical about religious values because in these posts, these accounts ignore the fact that both terrorism events were incident carried out by perpetrators of terror and killed many people. The post stating that terrorist events are fabricated, then rejecting the official facts and accompanied by evidence from the authorities, then attacking people who disagree with them by making claims in the form of concluding themselves without evidence, is a form of fanaticism.

A fanatic does not need to explore the truth because in total they are guided by the belief in themselves that they are always right. Mostly they also attack an imperfect and impure world order (Marimaa, 2011). Everyone has the right to make an opinion also argue. However, arguments in the form of claims that show something true or false must be accompanied by evidence.

What happened to the example post as listed in Figure 4.1. and 4.2 shows that people when they are fanatical no longer need to seek and state the truth based on evidence. The result is not only self-harm which can then lead to legal cases, but also divide the nation.

Some posts on social media in Indonesia that are religious in nature are not all fanatical. Sometimes it is still within normal limits or within the limits of postmodern dogmatic people. Fanaticism is more than just narrow thinking from dogmatic people. Fanatics will generally impose their beliefs in various ways. This also does not occur explicitly in posts on social media (Marimaa, 2011).

Fanatic people generally believe that if the views of their opponents are more dominant, then the opponent is a bad influence that must be stopped in various ways (Perkinson, 2002). This can be seen from the example of posting on social media in figure 4.3 which is related to the theme that the opposing party, namely the current government, is the party that utilizes hypocritical scholars, then hates Islam, and tries to discredit Islam with its decisions, without evidence to this claim. Giving opinions certainly not prohibited, but if this post spread out without proof or facts on social media, the post could be fall into the category of hate speech that has the potential to trigger controversy and fragmentation.

Not all fanaticism about religious values is a bad thing. Harmon (2005) provides an example, for example, of the religious attitude of a hermit or spiritual teacher who was considered strange in his day but could later become a role model for future generations. Another example is Voltaire's statement which says "I do not approve of your opinion, but I will defend to death your right to express an opinion".

The statement does not show fanatical character, but there is a fanatical spirit in defending the right of people to speak. Therefore good and bad fanaticism indeed depends on its use whether it is used to spread goodness or hatred (Marimaa, 2011).

Student Perception toward Fanaticism of Religion Value in Social Media During Indonesia's Pre-Campaign Period of Presidential Election 2019

Social media is a digital platform that accommodates users to tell stories, be heard and express all thoughts, especially for the millennial generation and Generation Z (Suliawan, 2018). The tirto.id survey shows that 35% of Z Generation in Indonesia chooses social media to access information (Adam, 2017). Social media has the features and arena of channeling expressions that are not owned by conventional media. One of them is providing the opportunity to become content creators and publish the content on their own social media without going through the gatekeeper like in conventional media.

The result of FGD in this research gathered from informants from 19 years old to 21 years old, revealed that most of them rely heavily on everyday social media to access information. Of the 50 informants, on average they spend time accessing social media 7 hours per day. The lowest range accessing 2 hours every day and highest range, accessing social media up to 14 hours per day. The average type of social media they access is Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and online.

These students admitted that they had always seen fanaticism postings towards religious values since the last 6 months during the pre-election campaign period, April to September 2017. Most informants felt that the types of posts were irrational because they were pitting and making people become fragmented. Generally, the informants aware that the post appeared because it is used as a political weapon and was intended to bring down political opponents.

However, not all informants were aware and cared about the types of posts on social media because they felt they were not interested in politics and religion. The results of the FGD showed that not all cons against the type of fanaticism toward religious value posts. Some understand, it happens because indeed the majority of people in Indonesia are religious and hold high religious values.

Almost all the informants however, disturbed by the existence of these posts because they think it would damage the value of nationalism and nationhood. They think posts with fanaticism towards religious values disturb the climate of tolerance and diversity in Indonesia. Some informants said that they felt that there was no problem with the posting as long as it did not interfere and force other people to have the same opinion. Furthermore, they agreed that such matters would not really affect their decision to elect 2019 presidential candidates.

Conclusion

Fanaticism is a natural and normal thing in everyday life. Not all fanaticism is bad even though many identify fanaticism with negativity. With the existence of social media, now everyone can easily channel his fanaticism through his social media.

Ahead of the 2019 presidential election, during the 6 months before the campaign many posts were fanaticism towards religious values in social media related to the support and rejection of presidential and vice-presidential candidates. Fanaticism towards religious values that contain hatred and negativity can have a negative impact to the community as a whole.

Having opinion is a right that must be protected, but opinions disrupt democracy and the stability of community life need to be watched out for because it can lead to legal problems and can divide society.

The recommendations of this study are, in addition to the need for media literacy, so that the public can filter information that reaches them well, it also requires education in the form of ethics and morals. The realm of fanaticism is very close to the psychology of action and the psychology of communication. Learning models related to critical thinking need to be developed because endless fanaticism, extremism and radicalism starting from the closed mind that rejects critical thinking.

Reference

- Adam, Aulia, 2017, April 27, *Selamat Tinggal Generasi Milenial, Selamat Datang Generasi Z*, Retrieved August 21, 2018, from www.tirto.id : <https://tirto.id/selamat-tinggal-generasi-milenial-selamat-datang-generasi-z-cnzX>
- Budiman, Manneke (1999). *Jatidiri Budaya dalam Proses "Nation-Building" di Indonesia Mengubah Kendala Menjadi Aset. Wacana*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1999
- Calhoun, L. (2004). *An Anatomy of Fanaticism. Peace Review*, Vol. 16, No. 3, pp.349—356
- Chan-Olmsted, Sylvia M; Cho, Moonhee; Lee, Sangwon (2013). *User Perception of Social Media A Comparative Study of Perceived Characteristics and User Profiles by Social Media. Online Journal of Communication and Media Technologies*. Volume: 3, Issue 4, 149-178
- Chou, Chieh-Mien (2014). *Social Media Characteristics, Customer Relationship and Brand Equity. Journal of Applied Business and Economics*. 16(1), 128-139
- Dewing, Michael (2010). *Social Media: An Introduction*. Canada: Library of Parliament
- Dykeman, D. (February 9, 2008). *How do you define social media? Broadcasting Brain*. Diunduh 25 Maret 2018 melalui <http://broadcasting-brain.com/2008/02/09/how-do-you-define-social-media/>
- Firman, J., & Gila, A. (1997). *The primal wound: A transpersonal view of trauma, addiction, and growth*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Habermas, Jurgen (2006). *Religion in the Public Sphere. European Journal of Philosophy* 14:1 pp. 1–25

- Harmon, C. C. (2005). *Fanaticism and Guerrilla Warfare in the Late Twentieth Century*. In Hughes, Matthew. *Fanaticism and Conflict in the Modern Age*. pp. 101—115. London & New York: Frank Cass
- Hastings, Adrian (2001). *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion, and Nationalism*. United Kingdom: University Press, Cambridge
- K, Sajithra & Patil, Rajindra (2013). Social Media- History and Components. *IOSR Journal of Business and Management (IOSR-JBM)*. 7, 1. 69-74
- Marimaa, K (2011). The Many Faces of Fanticism. *ENDC Proceedings*, 14, 29–55
- Nmah, Patrick (2012). Religious Fanaticism, a Threat to National Security: The Case of Boko Haram Sect. *UJAH: Unizik Journal of Arts and Humanities*. 13, 1: 106-131
- Nmah, Patrick (2012). *Religious Fanaticism, a Threat to National Security: The Case of Boko Haram Sect*. *UJAH: Unizik Journal of Arts and Humanities*. 13. 1, 106-131
- Perkinson, H. J. (2002). Fanaticism: Flight from Fallibility. *ETC: A Review of General Semantics*, . 59, 2, pp. 170—174.
- Suliawan, Gita, 2018, June 12, *Netiquette for Millennials and Gen Z in Disruptive Era of Social Media*. Retrieved August 21, 2018, from www.thriveglobal.com:
<https://www.thriveglobal.com/stories/30319-netiquette-for-millennials-and-gen-z-in-disruptive-era-of-social-media>
- Suryana (2010). *Metodologi Penelitian Model Praktis Penelitian Kuantitatif dan Kualitatif*. Bandung: Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia