Buzzer Group Propaganda on Social Media (Case Study: Cyberwar Netizens about Lockdown Polemics/Quarantine Areas on Twitter Social Media)

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Abstract

Based on the latest data from the Covid-19 Task Force Team on March 30, 2020, there have been 1,414 cumulative positive cases, with 122 people dying, and 75 people being declared cured. Through the mapping of global coronavirus updates by John Hopkins University, the death rate for Covid-19 patients in Indonesia is highest in Southeast Asia and far surpasses neighboring countries. The increasingly widespread distribution causes high pressure from the public to immediately take extreme steps to prevent the spread from spreading further. Through the Twitter social media platform, there was a cyberwar between netizens to form arguments and discourses that could influence public opinion. Freedom of expression in the use of social media is used as a gap for buzzers to agitate and propaganda to win a cyberwar.

I. Introduction

The rapid development of technology provides convenience for us to communicate and interact with other people without being limited by distance and time. The increasing number of internet users, especially social media, has become very influential in human life today. Various information can be easily accessed and shared through the internet, both formally through online news portals and informally through social media.

Social media is an example of a relatively recent development of information technology (Marbun *et al*, 2020). The development of social media today is quite increasing with the many types of social media available such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Youtube, Whatsapp, Tiktok platforms etc. Social media, whether consciously or not, allows the public to control various policies and services provided by the government/state and the private sector. Through social media, voices or opinions from minority parties or those rarely accommodated by the main media can be channeled. Then the presence of the internet as one of the main components and supporters in the world of cyberspace which is useful for users to interact with one another.

Vivian (2008) states that the internet is a form of mass media that supports democratic activities where individual social actors are not bound by a rule to express expression. Therefore, the weakness in using the internet without supervision, so that the content or information submitted to the public is not guaranteed the level of validity and accuracy.

We can see this phenomenon on various social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram which are used by netizens to send or disseminate information that is not yet clear. Currently, the use of the Twitter platform is more often used for buzzer groups in forming a cluster that aims to create a trending issue.

The social media platform Twitter is more often used to disseminate politically nuanced information and voice democratic activities and activities (Small, 2011). The information is then disseminated by the buzzer group continuously and without stopping to netizens to spread the hate speech. Some of the strategies used by buzzer groups are the use and strengthening of hate arguments through propaganda and agitation techniques by making false information or news (hoaks) and hate speech against a character or group.

The phenomenon of the massive spread of COVID-19 has become a polemic between pro and contra government groups on social media. For example, the narrative of the regional quarantine discourse which is currently being debated has caused uproar among netizens in cyberspace. Netizens are provoked and provoked by spreading messages and information that are hate speech and have agitation values and content propaganda in the form of racist and sarcastic memes and videos.

Based on these problems, this paper examines how the polemic of the regional quarantine policy due to the spread of the Covid-19 virus on Twitter social media.

II. Review of Literature

2.1 Social Media

The use of social media which was originally intended to provide convenience, comfort for someone to communicate and interact with others, has recently shown the opposite situation. Currently, social media is more widely used by audiences with various hidden motivations, interests, and intentions, most of which have a negative impact on users and society.

The impact of the presence of the internet has unwittingly brought changes in communication styles. David Croteau and William Hoyness (2014) reveal that the influence of internet use has created ambiguity and bias between news producers and news recipients. Not only that, the development of the internet has also changed several characteristics of mass media from one-way communication to interactive communication. The ease of accessing the internet, which can be accessed anytime and anywhere, also has an impact on media creation. People can create their own media anywhere and anytime in various ways, including using media that is managed and created by the company or can manage the media freely and independently. This has an impact on shifting the use of alternative media to mainstream media which in this case it does not have various rules in loading content or news.

These changes in communication styles that are increasingly interactive can be found on several social media networks and platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Youtube, etc. These social media networking sites allow users to interact and participate in the dissemination of information and news. Andreas Kaplan and Michael Haenlain (2010) then define social media as an internet-based group or application that allows the exchange of information or content (user-generated content) between users.

2.2 Buzzer Phenomenon

The development of the massive use of social media has given rise to the buzzer industry which is used as a reinforcement of public opinion and ideas in seeking support. The involvement of buzzers in Indonesia in political events has contributed negatively to the image and meaning of buzzers. Various events such as the election of the Governor of DKI in 2014 and 2016 have made a negative stamp for the buzzers who are used as the most powerful political weapon to win the political competition.

The concept of Opinion Leader in Rogers and Cartono (in Windham, 2009) states the extent to which an individual is able to influence others through attitudes or behaviors that are present with a certain frequency and are considered appropriate. It can be said that opinion leaders are intermediaries who receive and convey various information to the surrounding community.

Furthermore, the Hierarchy of Influence theory proposed by Pamela J Shoemaker and Stephen D Reese describes what factors can influence news content including individuals, media habits, organizations, additional media, and ideology.

2.3 Agitation and Propaganda

According to Harbert Blumer in Arifin (2003:65), agitation is carried out to grow and arouse individuals to carry out a political movement by stimulating the emotions of the audience through oral and written. Then Lumer in Arifin (2003:71) says that the purpose of this agitation activity is to create a sense of anxiety in the audience so that there is support for new ideas and ideologies so as to create new conditions.

Then Dan Nimmo (2005) states that there are three approaches used in political communication, namely propaganda, advertising, and rhetoric. The three approaches all have the purpose of intentionally or unintentionally creating public participation with the ultimate goal of influencing public perceptions and beliefs.

Then Harold D Lasswell in Arifin (2003) defines the notion of propaganda as control of opinion by using important symbols that can be formed in news, information, images or other forms of communication to influence human actions by also manipulating representations. Then Laswell saw that propaganda can bring human influence to a confused and disoriented attitude so that it can disseminate information to influence individual attitudes and behavior with the aim of mindwashing. Leonardo W. Dobb in Arifin (2011) states that propaganda is an attempt by individuals or groups to control attitudes by instilling a thought or suggestion.

III. Research Method

The research in this paper uses a qualitative approach. Creswell (1998) states that qualitative research is a process in research based on a methodology or investigation of a social phenomenon and all individual problems. Furthermore, this type of research is descriptive which aims to describe how the role of social media, especially the twitter platform, can spread agitation and propaganda to netizens in cyberspace.

Then the technique of analyzing this data is to use case studies through directed data collection. Analysis of the data was carried out with three activities, namely the process of reduction, visualization or presentation of data, and making conclusions. Data reduction performs the process of selecting and selecting data, simplification and transformation of raw data containing records of data findings in the field. Data reduction aims to sharpen and categorize data, so as to get rid of unnecessary data. The results of the data will then be concluded and verified (Silalahi, 2006:312).

IV. Results and Discussion

As the object of study, the author observes the actual phenomenon that is happening at this time, namely how the role of the buzzer in agitating and propaganda on the issue of the spread of the corona virus in Indonesia. The interaction process of the buzzer group is very much felt on the Twitter social media platform with the polemic issue of the regional lockdown/quarantine policy.

The following are the monitoring results mapped by the results of the Social Network Analysis mapping:
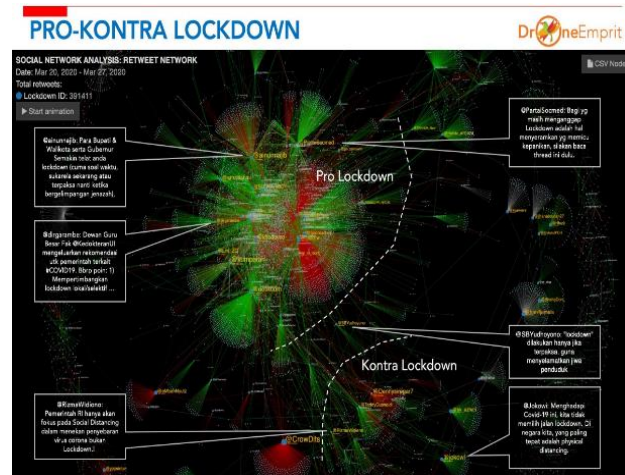
Source: SNA Drone Emprit Indonesia

Based on the results of SNA's observations on social media, especially the Twitter platform regarding the polemic about the lockdown due to the impact of the spread of the corona virus, a narrative battle room has been found from the involvement of the buzzer in this matter. The buzzers who are grouped into a cluster consisting of groups of pros and cons, continue to disseminate opinions massively to be able to influence public opinion. From this data, there are some of the most popular tweets, including:

4.1 Pro-Lockdown Group

a. The account @ainunnajib tweeted "Regents & Mayors throughout Indonesia must be prepared. Since the Central Government has decided that there will be no lockdown (for example for Jakarta, Jabodetabek, Bali), then the epidemic from those epicenters will inevitably reach all over the archipelago, into your Regency/City" with 2,000 retweets and 3,100 likes.

b. The @PartaiSocmed account tweeted "Indonesia has 2 choices: 1. Implement a lockdown and other drastic measures with self-awareness, or. 2. Lockdown (exiled) by other countries because they are considered incompetent to handle the Covid-19 pandemic" with 576 retweets and 769 likes.

In the narration in the tweet by the @PartaiSocmed account, it shows the government's insistence on immediately implementing a lockdown or regional quarantine. The narrative is then supported by an affirmation of discourse from news sources/links that describe the conditions of other countries that have taken lockdown measures to reduce the spread of the corona virus. The @PartaiSocmed account has acted as an intermediary for messages to the public in cyberspace.

c. The @mas_piyuuu account shared a tweet "President Jokowi Instructs No Lockdown, Warganet: Just Say You Don't Have Moneyhttps://bit.ly/2Qz3MBq" with 283 retweets and 915 likes.

The government's discourse through President Joko Widodo's statement saying that Indonesia will not carry out a lockdown has been responded negatively by the buzzer account @mas__piyuu which has the impression of being insulting and sarcastic regarding this statement. The process of provocation and propaganda from the results of these tweets is considered effective in spreading hate speech and insults to state symbols. For example, a netizen gave a response in the comment column that emphasized the government's unpreparedness in carrying out the lockdown. This

argument is then followed by several issues that confirm the government's failure to manage state finances.

d. The @dirgarambe account tweeted "The Board of Professors Fak @MedokteranUI issues recommendations to the government regarding #COVID19. Some points:
   1. *Considering local/selective lockdown*
   2. *Provide PPE*
   3. *Improve inter-agency coordination*
   4. *Making decisions based on evidence-based"*with 2,700 retweets and 3,300 likes.

4.2 Lockdown Counter Group

The buzzer community that supports the government is also actively involved in supporting the policy not to take lockdown/regional quarantine in anticipation of preventing the spread of the corona virus in Indonesia. The strengthening of the argument by the buzzer group is carried out using the same technique, namely acting as a public intermediary for information published in online media. The news sources were then added with narratives and discourses on the rejection of the lockdown, accompanied by insulting and provocative sentences against opponents (pro-lockdown groups).

a. The @Rizmawidiono account shared a tweet "Record.! The Indonesian government will only focus on Social Distancing in suppressing the spread of the corona virus, not Lockdown.! The noise is Lokdan, Lokdon, Lockdown...you have to read this.! *#LawanVirusPolitikCorona*" with 394 retweets and 947 likes.

The results of the narration shared in the @Rizmawidiono account also received support and were responsive to the action of rejecting the lockdown. This can be seen from the response in the comments column to the tweet, which is also insulting and sarcastic towards a public figure.

b. The @Dennysiregar7 account shared a video and tweeted "It seems like the lockdown model is cool like this in India. They were told to stay at home, instead they gathered at a place of worship.. Do you think the cadres are ready or not? Or maybe he's the one who cracked the lockdown, he's also the one who demos if he's really in lockdown.. Face with a health mask, Face with a health mask" with a total of 931 retweets and 3,100 likes.

The @dennysiregar7 account post also strengthens the argument in the form of a comparison of the implementation of the lockdown in India which ended with very strict sanctions against people who still roam outside (not implementing social distancing).

However, in the comments column, the narrative battle of the buzzer groups occurs because it contains elements of SARA, considering that recently there have been incidents of anarchism against Muslims in India.

The comments war that occurred in the @dannysiregar7 account tweets seemed to be an emotional collection of netizens against opposing groups.

c. Media Online's Twitter account @Detikcom shared a tweet "President Joko Widodo (Jokowi) has ensured that he will not take any steps to lock down in the midst of the increasingly massive spread of the Corona virus (COVID-19). With 491 retweets and 2,200 likes.

4.3 Narrative Strengthening by Using Twitter Hashtags

The use of hashtags or hashtags is the most effective way to push a topic or issue into the Top Trending Issues on the Twitter platform. This method is a buzzer strategy in spreading propaganda by strengthening the arguments and narratives that are built so that netizens can be influenced by the messages that are built.

The push for a lockdown by pro-lockdown groups used the hashtag #LockDownIndonesia as a trigger to spread messages to fellow buzzer communities and individual netizens.

V. Conclusion

Based on the data above, we can see various phenomena that occur not only current events or events, but also how people respond to these phenomena, especially social media users. The news circulating gave rise to many opinions that were formed and formed a pattern which in the end grouped them into two blocks, namely the pros and cons.

The involvement of the buzzer can be found clearly in the efforts to amplify the message to the audience (netizens) by utilizing several strategies, including the use of hashtags or #hashtags to build conversations naturally or artificially, then utilizing news site snippets to increase the credibility of the content, as well as utilizing networks. owned by buzzer groups and short messaging applications such as Whatsapp Group and Telegram media to spread content. Evidently, the strategies and methods carried out in the buzzer community resulted in public interaction on social media with a variety of reactions generated.

In the Pro-lockdown group, the typology of message dissemination is carried out dynamically and is bolder in expressing opinions. It can be seen from the @mas__piyuu account which is an anonymous account (buzzer) using a more emotional approach in expressing opinions to create a public discourse.

Meanwhile in the Contra Lockdown group, they have more motives to use influencers as informants to the public, acting as public intermediaries for the information conveyed.

The more controversial the caption or the title of the tweet, the louder the hate speech will be. This has not only fueled hatred among supporters, but has also created unrest and restlessness among individuals.

It can be said that the process of agitation and propaganda is contained in provocative narratives and discourses that are carried out continuously by buzzer groups on the twitter platform.

In addition, this phenomenon can describe a situation where the role of the buzzer in political communication tends to be destructive rather than constructive, aiming to destroy the emotions of the audience without a sense of ethics and justice in humanity. The value presented in this phenomenon also states that the spirit of democracy in cyberspace produces things that are not desired by the benefits of the existence of social media and the internet.

In the polemic issue of the lockdown policy discourse, the use of buzzers plays an active role in influencing public opinion without prioritizing the substance and content of the message conveyed to the audience. In the SNA map, it can be concluded that the tweets conveyed only used the tendency of perceptual and emotional similarities to win the sympathy of netizens. The narrative battle also cannot answer the meaning, definition, of the term lockdown or regional quarantine. All are just debating government policies without conducting a deeper study. Therefore, it is necessary to have education in the form of literacy and transparent narratives to prevent misuse of information or messages from social media which can then threaten public security and order.

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