DIGITAL THEOCRACY STRATEGY IN THE 2024 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN: ITS INFLUENCE ON PUBLIC OPINION AND VOTER CHOICE

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ABSTRACT

Digital technology and social media development have significantly impacted various aspects of life, including politics. Digital campaign strategies have become increasingly important in presidential elections to influence public opinion and voters' choices. In addition, the emergence of the digital theocracy that combines elements of religion and technology in political campaigns adds a new dimension to the modern political arena.

This study investigates how digital theocracy strategies used in the 2024 presidential campaign influence public opinion and voter choice. The research method used in this study is a qualitative research method with a content analysis approach. Data will be collected through content observation on various social media and literature studies obtained through Google Scholar. The data that has been collected will be analyzed using a content analysis approach. The results show that the digital theocracy strategy in the presidential election campaign can take various forms, such as sharing religious quotes, participating in religious activities, providing moral messages and religious ethics, religion-based campaigns, responding to religion-based issues, and collaborating with religious figures.

KEYWORDS

Digital Theocracy, Campaign, Presidential Election, Public Opinion, Voter Choice

INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology and social media has brought significant changes in various aspects of life, including in the world of politics. This transformation has changed the way of communication, interaction, and access to...
information and established new patterns of interaction between society, political actors, and political issues. Digital technology and social media provide a forum for faster and wider expression of opinions, political participation, and information distribution (Mahliana, 2019).

Technology as a political forum is also commonly called digital political campaigns. Digital political campaigns are political marketing and promotion efforts that use digital technology and social media as the main means to achieve political campaign goals (Sulton & Harsasto, 2020). Through digital political campaigns, political candidates and political parties can utilize online platforms such as websites, social media, email, and online advertisements to communicate with potential voters, convey political messages, build image, and influence public opinion to achieve support or votes in general elections.

This digital campaign has also been implemented by all presidential candidate pairs in the 2019 general election, namely Jokowi-Ma'ruf and Prabowo-Sandi (Perdana & Wildianti, 2018). Implementing digital campaigns allows candidates and campaign teams to communicate directly with the masses through various online platforms, creating a space to spread their messages more quickly and widely. In the presidential election, the use of digital campaign strategies has become increasingly important to influence public opinion and voter choice, and this has also given rise to digital theocracy campaign strategies, giving a new dimension to political campaign dynamics. Digital theocracy campaigns combine religious elements and digital technologies, creating opportunities to influence public opinion through religiously charged messages. However, using digital theocracy campaign strategies in politics can generate mixed responses from the public and trigger sensitive discussions.

Previous research conducted by (Triantoro, 2019) examined the practice of identity politics in Anies-Sandi's social media accounts. The results of this study showed that the practice of identity politics in their social media accounts tended to display Islamic religious symbols. The strengthening of the practice of identity politics represents the emergence of radical Islamic movements, conservatives, Islamism, and upper-middle-class Muslims in Indonesia. A similar study (Kusumawardhana & Rizkimawati, 2022) examines political benefits in the digital era with a case study on the Jokowi-Ma'ruf Amin presidential candidate pair. This research shows that Jokowi-Ma'ruf's victory as President and vice president for the 2019 election is an interesting phenomenon, especially related to the use of campaign strategies carried out by this presidential candidate pair as part of their political communication. The built narrative seems to emphasise Muslim voters more by using profiling or micro-targeting strategies to get votes from voters in the five-year democratic party event by applying four elements of political marketing that support the campaign.

The novelty of this research is from the object of its research, namely the 2024 Presidential Election and examines aspects of influence on public opinion and voter choice. Based on this background description, researchers are interested in conducting research entitled "Digital Theocracy Strategies in the 2024 Presidential Election Campaign: Its Influence on Public Opinion and Voter Choice". The purpose of this study is to investigate how the digital theocracy strategies
used in the 2024 presidential election campaign affect public opinion and voter choice.

**RESEARCH METHOD**

The research method used in this study is a qualitative research method with a content analysis approach. According to (Sugiyono, 2018) qualitative research methods are research methods based on philosophy used to research in scientific conditions (experiments) where researchers as instruments, data collection techniques and qualitative analysis emphasize meaning. The research will analyze content disseminated through social media, websites, and digital platforms related to the 2024 presidential election campaign with a focus on elements of digital theocracy contained in these messages. Data will be collected through observing content on various candidates' social media related to the 2024 presidential election campaign using digital theocracy strategies, and literature studies obtained through Google Schoolar. The data that has been collected will be analyzed using a content analysis approach.

**RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The democratization process as one of the reform agendas in Indonesia has currently shown quite satisfactory results. The process of amending the 1945 Constitution, which resulted in changes in the electoral system of the President and Vice President who were directly elected by the people is clear evidence of the democratization process in Indonesia (Meliala, 2020). The 2024 elections are about to be held. In the election, the Presidential Election (Pilpres) was held simultaneously with the Legislative Election (Ardipandanto, 2020). The President is a leader of a country that brings the people he leads to move forward to build a better country so that it is not left behind by other more developed countries (Nurfaizi, 2020). A president must also be able to lead well to all people from various circles in his country.

The importance of campaigns can actually be known when we understand the meaning of political campaigns themselves. A political campaign is an organized effort that seeks to influence the decision-making process within a particular group. In democracies, political campaigns often refer to election campaigns, in which a candidate or leadership candidate is elected. In modern politics, the most prominent political campaigns are focused on elections and candidates for head of state or head of government (Fatimah, 2018a, 2018b). A campaign is a series of planned communication actions with the aim of creating a certain effect on a large number of audiences that are carried out continuously at a certain period of time (Kemal & Ernungtyas, 2020).

Elections (elections) process authority legally by the participation of candidates in control so that the applicable supervisory body is authorized by law. Currently, the presence of social media for most people has become a necessity that is felt in life to have its own big role in society. Sources of information through so-
cial media become a means of interacting to socialize. Moreover, the current era of globalization is very rapid technological development, one of which is the internet. Internet-based technology even globally, communication can be done not limited by space and time in conducting interactions that can be used through several media to look at each other and even video calls (Kurniawan & Mutiah, 2022). From a number of names of presidential candidates published in 2024 by the media, the figures chosen by presidential candidates, mostly from social media and some mentions from television and other digital media (Pramelani & Widyastuti, 2021).

Pollsters continue to release sigi results related to the electability of presidential candidates who are predicted to participate in the Presidential General Election, including Prabowo Subianto, Ganjar Pranowo, and Anies Baswedan (Indonesia, 2023). These three candidates often share their various activities through social media, one of which is Instagram. Presidential candidates can easily share photos, videos, and short messages that provide an overview of their campaigns, participation in public events, meetings with citizens, and thoughts on important issues in government and society. Presidential candidates by sharing activities via social media can build closer relationships with the public, providing a more transparent picture of what they do and the future plans they offer.

Presidential candidates competing in the 2024 presidential election can take advantage of opportunities to use various strategies in campaigns, one of which is the theocracy strategy. Theocracy is a form of government or political system in which political authority and state power are held by religious leaders or religious institutions. In theocracy, the rules and laws of the country are based on religious principles and religious leaders have a key role in political and governmental decision-making. These systems often integrate religion and government into an inseparable whole. Because of its implementation in digital media, this strategy is called digital theocracy which refers to the use of digital technology and social media to convey messages with religious nuances or religious values in an effort to influence public opinion and voter choices. Some forms of Digital Theocracy in political campaigns may include:

1. Sharing Religious Quotes
   Political candidates share excerpts from certain scriptures or religious teachings that are relevant to their political issues or views. This aims to show the compatibility of political views with religious values adhered to.

2. Participation in Religious Activities
   Political candidates often participate in religious activities, such as worship or other religious events, and share those moments through social media. This creates an image that the candidate has a close connection with religious values.
In picture 1, presidential candidate Anies Baswedan participated in a religious activity, namely praying or Gema ABW at the Ziyadatul Fadhilah Foundation.

In picture 2, Prabowo Subianto shares his religious activities attending an invitation from Gus Rofi in a Prayer Event for the nation organized by the Riyadul Jannah Council at the Istiqlal Mosque, with Habib Jindan bin Salim bin Jindan and Habib Nabil Al Musawa with tens of thousands of worshippers.

3. Moral and Ethical Message

Political candidates can take contemporary issues and analyze them from the moral and ethical point of view of religion. They then shared their views on the issue, emphasising relevant religious values.

4. Religious Issue-Based Campaigns
Political candidates may design campaigns that raise religious issues, such as the protection of religious rights or policies that support religious morality. These campaign contents can be disseminated through social media with the aim of attracting the attention of voters of the same religious background.

5. Response to Faith-Based Issues

Political candidates can respond to certain issues with a religious point of view. They can comment on policies, events, or other issues from the perspective of religious values.

6. Collaboration with Religious Leaders

Political candidates can collaborate with prominent religious figures to convey religious messages through social media. This can give legitimacy and support from religious figures to political campaigns.

In figure 3, ganjar pranowo shares a portrait of his activities with Bhante Pannavaro, a figure from Buddhism. Although a form of digital theocracy has been seen on the social media of 2024 presidential candidates, the official campaign from the General Elections Commission (KPU) has not yet begun. The KPU sets the rules for the 2024 election campaign with the issuance of PKPU Number 15 of 2023 concerning the 2024 election campaign. The PKPU regarding this campaign will take effect on July 14, 2023. In this PKPU it contains that the campaign is carried out simultaneously by all election participants. Meanwhile, the election campaign schedule in PKPU is carried out through several stages. In addition to containing campaign rules, the PKPU regulates the 2024 election campaign schedule which will be held from November 28, 2023 to February 10, 2024. The KPU also regulates the campaign schedule for the presidential election in the event of a second round, on June 2-22, 2024. Here is the complete schedule of the 2024 election campaign (Rahman, 2023):

1. November 28, 2023-February 10, 2024
   Limited meetings, face-to-face meetings, dissemination of campaign materials to the public, installation of campaign props in public places, debates of presidential and vice presidential candidates, and social media
2. January 21-February 10, 2024  
Campaign rallies, print mass media advertisements, electronic mass media, and online media
3. February 11-13, 2024  
Quiet period
4. February 14, 2024  
Concurrent voting Elections
5. June 2-22, 2024  
Additional campaigns in the event of a second round of presidential elections
6. June 23-25, 2024  
Quiet period.

The forms of digital theocracy implemented by these presidential candidates shape public opinion in society. Public opinion is an understanding of some people in the community who are constantly concerned about some value-laden influences or problems that both individuals and the government must value at least compromise in the form of open behavior based on threats to be expelled or exiled from society (Putri, 2020).

Sharing religious quotes in political campaigns can shape public opinion and voter choice by linking political candidates' views with people's religious values. These quotes illustrate the candidate's consistency in upholding religious principles relevant to political issues. In addition, participating in religious activities and sharing them through social media creates the image that political candidates have an emotional attachment to the religious community. This can increase support and trust from voters who value the candidate's interaction with the religious community. Through religious moral and ethical messages, political candidates can shape public opinion and voter choice by highlighting political issues in the context of religious values. This helps create the impression that the candidate's political views are in line with the religious ethics recognized by society. Then, Conducting campaigns based on religious issues can shape public opinion and voter choice by highlighting religious issues that are important to society. Political candidates can link their views to religious values and underscore how their policies will meet religious aspirations.

Political candidates' responses to faith-based issues can shape public opinion and voter choice by demonstrating their understanding and involvement in relevant religious issues. Intelligent and sensitive responses to these issues can gain support from religious communities. In addition, collaboration with religious leaders can shape public opinion and voter choice by providing moral and spiritual support to political candidates. The involvement of religious leaders can strengthen the candidate's positive views and image in the religious community.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that in the 2024 Presidential Election, a digital theocracy strategy has emerged as an attempt to influence public opinion and voter choice by integrating elements of religion or spirituality through social media and digital technology. While this strategy has
the potential to mobilize voters based on religious values and increase closeness to voters of a particular religious background, its impact also has risks. The use of religious narratives in politics can deepen polarization, reduce interfaith tolerance, and increase inequality in society. Digital theocracy strategies can also raise questions about the separation between religion and politics, and upset the balance between religious autonomy and political responsibility. Therefore, it is important for presidential candidates and campaign teams to consider these complex implications deeply in an effort to build inclusive and sustainable relationships with Indonesia's diverse society.

The digital theocracy strategy in the 2024 presidential election campaign reflects the presidential candidate's efforts to link religious messages with digital technology to influence public opinion and voter choice. The use of social media and online platforms allows for the widespread dissemination of religious messages, attracts voters who have strong religious affiliations, and tries to build closeness with a religious voter base. However, the implementation of this kind of strategy also has complex potential consequences. The risks of societal polarization, decreased religious tolerance, and neglect of relevant secular issues need to be taken seriously. In addition, the digital theocracy strategy also raises essential questions about the role of religion in politics and the importance of maintaining a balance between democratic principles, separation of religion and state, and the values of inclusivity to face the challenges of democratic and harmonious elections. All of these forms of Digital Theocracy are important to remember that their effects will vary depending on the sensitivity and diversity of society. Political candidates must be able to strike a balance between conveying religious messages and maintaining the principle of inclusivity, as well as respecting various beliefs.

REFERENCES


