



## The Role of Social Media as a Campaign Tool and its Impact on the Increase of Black Campaigning in Elections and Regional Elections

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### ARTICLE INFO

*Keywords:* Social Media, Black Campaign, National Elections, Local Elections

*Received :* 2, December

*Revised :* 16, December

*Accepted:* 30, December

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### ABSTRACT

Elections (Pemilu) are a critical mechanism in a democratic system, conducted based on the principles of direct, universal, free, secret, honest, and fair voting, as mandated by the 1945 Constitution of Indonesia. Law No. 7 of 2017 regulates electoral campaigns as activities aimed at persuading voters through the vision, mission, and image of election participants. However, in practice, Black Campaigns often occur, particularly on social media, which damage candidates' reputations through the spread of false information or defamation. This study aims to analyze the role of social media in election campaigns and its impact on the increase of Black Campaigns, which often exacerbate political polarization. The methodology used in this study is a normative legal approach, analyzing existing regulations related to election campaigns and the spread of negative content on social media. The findings indicate that although Black Campaigns are not explicitly regulated in the Election Law, they can be addressed through legal interpretation that allows for further regulation. While social media has the potential to strengthen democracy, it also serves as a platform for spreading harmful information. Therefore, stricter regulations, increased digital literacy in society, and more effective law enforcement are necessary to mitigate the negative impacts of Black Campaigns, in order to create more transparent and integrity-based elections.

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## INTRODUCTION

Public participation through elections is crucial in building a democratic country, as mandated by Article 22 E, paragraph (1) of the 1945 Constitution, which regulates the conduct of elections to be direct, universal, free, secret, honest, and fair every five years. This underscores the importance of conducting elections in accordance with these fundamental principles and applicable regulations. Law No. 7 of 2017 on Elections defines electoral campaigns as activities carried out to convince voters through the vision, mission, programs, and self-image of the election participants. The campaign procedures are regulated in Articles 267 to 339, which also include a prohibition on campaigns that contain elements of defamation based on SARA (ethnicity, religion, race, and intergroup relations), with criminal penalties for violators.

Negative campaigning, which focuses on highlighting the weaknesses of political opponents, often occurs during elections, particularly in presidential elections. This type of campaign is not prohibited as long as it is accompanied by valid data or arguments. However, Black Campaigns, which aim to destroy an opponent's character through false or unproven information, can undermine the integrity of the election and create social tensions, especially concerning sensitive issues such as religion and race.

In Indonesia, Black Campaigns are still prevalent due to difficulties in enforcement. This is caused by provisions in Law No. 7 of 2023, which require prior reporting to the Election Supervisory Body (Bawaslu), with a limitation period of only seven days after the violation is discovered. Black Campaigns involve various unethical actions to discredit opponents, such as defamation, character assassination, insults, and unpleasant acts. This practice often uses negative issues to damage the reputation of candidates, as seen in the 2014, 2019, and 2024 general elections. Although there are prohibitions in the Election Law, Black Campaigns (Kampanye Hitam) are not explicitly regulated. The law does set restrictions related to the election, such as prohibiting insults based on SARA (ethnicity, religion, race, and intergroup relations) and the use of government facilities in campaigns. Violations of these provisions may result in criminal penalties.

Social media exacerbates the spread of Black Campaigns (Kampanye Hitam) because it is difficult to trace the identities of those spreading hoaxes. Although the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (Kemenkominfo) has recorded numerous political hoaxes, law enforcement still faces challenges. Black Campaigns harm democracy by creating misleading public opinions, damaging the reputation of candidates, and diminishing the quality of public choices through misleading information.

A survey by Kompas Research and Development (Litbang Kompas) on the national political situation shows that 36.3% of respondents believe that provocative buzzers or influencers worsen political polarization, while 21.6% attribute the spread of hoaxes as a contributing factor. Additionally, 13.4% blame the lack of involvement of national figures, and 5.8% point to social media. A total of 87.8% of respondents support decisive action against provocative buzzers. The survey involved 1,004 respondents with a 95% confidence level.

Black Campaign through social media has become a significant issue, as information can be disseminated quickly via the internet, worsening political polarization. Social media allows hoaxes to spread in seconds and often involves deceptive advertisements.

Bawaslu plays a key role in overseeing elections, addressing administrative and criminal violations, as well as election disputes. Its responsibility is to ensure that elections are conducted according to democratic principles. Additionally, the General Election Commission (KPU) plays a role in preventing Black Campaigns by developing regulations and educating the public. KPU collaborates with Bawaslu to monitor violations and raise awareness about the negative impact of Black Campaigns. The Sentra Gakkumdu, involving Bawaslu, the police, and the prosecutor's office, also contributes to handling election-related criminal violations, ensuring that the legal process is effective and the integrity of elections is upheld. The Sentra Gakkumdu, which involves Bawaslu, the police, and the prosecutor's office, also plays a role in handling criminal violations related to elections, ensuring that the legal process runs effectively and maintaining the integrity of the election.

Therefore, it is important for the General Election Commission (KPU) and the Election Supervisory Body (Bawaslu) to give special attention to regulations and the handling of campaigns on social media. Currently, the Election Law does not specifically regulate criminal offenses related to the use of social media in political campaigns. Therefore, clear legal rules and boundaries regarding Black Campaigns (Black Campaign) in election violations are needed, so that a harmonious and integrity-based election can be achieved.

The purpose of this research is to analyze the role of social media as a campaign tool in general elections (Pemilu) and regional elections (Pilkada), as well as its impact on the increase in Black Campaign practices. This study seeks to explore the role of social media in spreading information, influencing voters, and promoting the dissemination of hoaxes, defamation, and negative information that may worsen public attitudes. Additionally, this research aims to identify the impact of Black Campaigns on the integrity of elections and public perception.

## **THEORETICAL REVIEW**

### ***Social Media***

Social media is a digital platform that allows its users to create, share, and interact with content in the form of text, images, videos, or sound. Through social media, individuals, groups, or organizations can communicate and connect with each other, whether for personal, social, or business purposes.

### ***Black Campaign***

A black campaign is a strategy in the world of politics, business, or media that aims to damage the reputation of a person, group, or organization by spreading false, misleading, or personally attacking information. The goal of these campaigns is to discredit opponents or competitors, create negative

perceptions, and reduce their support or credibility in the eyes of the public.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This research uses a normative legal research approach, which involves analyzing applicable laws and regulations to address specific legal issues. As part of normative legal research, the approaches used include the statutory approach, analytical approach, and case approach. In the process of gathering legal materials, normative research typically begins with the statutory approach, where the researcher identifies and collects relevant regulations regarding Black Campaigns in electoral processes through social media. This is followed by strengthening the theoretical framework through books or legal literature (conceptual approach), and further data collection involves reviewing documents related to Black Campaign practices in elections and social media.

## **RESULTS**

### ***Role of Social Media as a Campaign Tool***

Campaigns are essential communication activities that support the electoral process. They serve as a structured means to introduce candidates, persuade, influence, and attract support from individuals or communities within a specified period. Political campaigns are organized efforts to influence public opinion, aiming to alter or reinforce certain ideas, attitudes, or actions. The main goal is to influence constituents and garner sympathy towards political messages. Campaigns target an audience comprising individuals who interact within a public sphere. While the aim is to influence, not all information received will have an immediate impact, as other factors shape how individuals and groups process and filter the information.

Undoubtedly, technological advancements affect every aspect of life. Information distribution has become increasingly effective, fast, and efficient. According to data published by the Ministry of Communication and Information, there are 88.1 million internet users in Indonesia, with 84% of them being young adults. Furthermore, 63 million Indonesians are active Facebook users, while 50 million use Twitter. This data highlights the correlation between human interaction with technology and the internet. The rapid growth of internet use and technology has, perhaps unconsciously, influenced the democratic processes in countries worldwide. For example, the mass movement in Egypt was informed through Facebook and Twitter, Hong Kong's support for democracy was amplified via social media, and political candidates in the 2024 Indonesian elections utilized social media platforms for political communication, such as the online battle between Prabowo-Gibran, Anies-Muhaimin, and Ganjar-Mahfud.

Social media has transformed the political landscape by providing a platform for broader participation and quick exchanges of ideas. However, it has also nurtured the practice of manipulating public opinion and spreading false information, including Black Campaigns. Through social media, information can be disseminated rapidly, allowing negative campaigns that

damage the reputation of political opponents through defamation or hoaxes to go viral. The algorithms that promote sensational content contribute to hoaxes becoming viral, while the anonymity provided by social media complicates efforts to tackle the perpetrators of Black Campaigns. Despite offering broader access to information, social media can exacerbate political polarization and undermine the quality of democracy if not appropriately regulated.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Social Media Campaigns:

*Advantages:*

1. **Increased Political Participation:** Social media provides easy access for various segments of society to engage in political discussions, offering a platform for those who were previously inactive or without access to traditional media. Platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram allow users to voice opinions, share ideas, and interact with politicians or fellow citizens, thus enhancing involvement in the democratic process.
2. **Exposing Systemic Issues:** Social media allows information to be shared quickly, enabling the exposure of flaws or issues within political systems, policies, or government actions. Information that might have been suppressed or inaccessible through traditional media can be easily disseminated, giving the public more insight and improving accountability.
3. **Transparency:** The speed and reach of social media compel politicians and governments to be more transparent about their actions and policies. Citizens can promptly respond to government policies and politicians' actions, forcing public officials to be more open and accountable. This also promotes transparency in elections, where public scrutiny of candidates and political processes is heightened.

*Disadvantages:*

1. **Spread of False Information:** While social media can accelerate the distribution of legitimate information, it is also used to spread fake news or defamation rapidly. The lack of adequate control and algorithms that often prioritize sensational content allows false information to go viral within minutes, influencing public opinion and undermining the integrity of political campaigns.
2. **Polarization and Conflict:** Social media algorithms, which prioritize content aligned with users' interests, often exacerbate political polarization. This creates "filter bubbles," where users only receive information that aligns with their views, reducing opportunities to hear different perspectives. Consequently, polarization deepens, dividing society and affecting social stability.
3. **Vulnerability to Manipulation:** Social media is highly susceptible to manipulation, both by individuals and groups with political or economic agendas. These actors can exploit the platform to disseminate propaganda, hoaxes, or divisive content to sway public opinion or influence voter behavior. Black Campaigns run on social media are

often difficult to trace and halt due to the secrecy and anonymity afforded by these platforms.

To mitigate the negative impacts of Black Campaigns and the manipulation of information on social media, several crucial steps need to be taken. One of these is the implementation of stricter regulations on content circulating on platforms, requiring social media companies to verify the accuracy of information and impose penalties on those who spread falsehoods. Additionally, increasing digital literacy among users is essential, so they can more effectively discern the information they receive. Education on recognizing hoaxes and understanding the algorithms behind information dissemination on social media can help individuals use these platforms more wisely. International collaboration is also needed, where countries work together to establish global standards to combat Black Campaigns and the spread of false information. By taking these steps, social media can be used more positively to strengthen democracy and safeguard the integrity of elections while reducing the risk of abuse for specific interests.

Social media plays a crucial role in modern political campaigns by providing an effective platform to introduce candidates, spread political messages, and gather public support. With technological advancements, social media facilitates the rapid and wide distribution of information, enhancing political participation and transparency in the electoral process. However, the use of social media also presents significant challenges, such as the spread of false information, political polarization, and vulnerability to manipulation. Therefore, while social media has immense potential to strengthen democracy, it is essential to regulate and manage these platforms carefully to minimize negative impacts such as Black Campaigns and the dissemination of hoaxes. Stricter regulations, enhanced digital literacy, and international collaboration are necessary steps to ensure that social media serves as a positive and effective campaigning tool.

### ***The Impact of Social Media on the Increase of Black Campaigns in Elections and Regional Elections***

In the digital era, social media has become an essential tool in various aspects of life, including campaigning. It provides an accessible and low-cost platform for political elites to spread messages, advocate for social issues, promote organizational activities, and build communities. However, successful campaigns require appropriate strategies in using social media.

Social media has become an effective campaigning tool for politicians due to its broad accessibility, low costs, and ease of interaction with audiences. Platforms like Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and TikTok enable campaign messages to reach a large number of people quickly and efficiently, without the high costs of traditional campaigns. Additionally, social media supports two-way communication, allowing feedback and enabling campaigns to adjust strategies based on audience responses. With engaging content, social media also effectively raises awareness of social issues, making it an ideal choice for candidates with limited resources.

Social media now plays a significant role in political campaigns. Initially used for personal social interactions and communication with family and friends, it has evolved into a tool for institutional and individual communication. This platform is considered an effective means for political candidates to interact with the public on behalf of their parties and promote their programs. An example of this is Barack Obama's intensive use of social media in his 2008 U.S. presidential campaign.

According to research by Ardha (2014), based on an APJII survey in 2012, the number of internet users in Indonesia reached 63 million people, about 24.23% of the total population, with the number continuing to rise each year. However, the use of social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter by political parties in Indonesia was still underutilized. Of the 12 political parties participating in the 2014 elections, four – PAN, PKB, PPP, and PKPI – did not have official Twitter accounts. However, all four had Facebook accounts with significant followings.

In the 2019 elections, the Ministry of Communication and Information (Kemenkominfo) identified 771 hoax contents on the internet from August 2018 to February 2019, and more recently, 1,971 hoax news related to the 2024 elections. Indonesia has various legal frameworks to regulate campaigns and address challenges such as Black Campaigns, including the following regulations:

1. 1945 Constitution: Article 28E, paragraph (3), guarantees freedom of association, assembly, and expression as the basis for democratic political campaigns.
2. Law No. 7 of 2023: Concerns the revision of Law No. 7 of 2017 regarding General Elections.
3. Law No. 1 of 2024: Amendments to Law No. 11 of 2008 on Electronic Information and Transactions: Regulates the spread of false news and hate speech online. Violations of Article 28 of the ITE Law can result in criminal penalties, including up to 6 years in prison or a fine of up to IDR 1 billion.
4. Government Regulations: Serve as technical guidelines for efficient election administration and support the election law.
5. Law No. 1 of 2015: Article 69 prohibits slander, incitement, and the use of violence in campaigns. Violations can result in penalties of up to 18 months in prison or a fine of up to IDR 6 million.
6. General Election Commission (KPU) Regulations: Regulate the technical details of campaign practices, such as procedures for implementation (PKPU No. 23/2018) and campaign fund reporting (PKPU No. 24/2018).
7. Additional Provisions: Provided through KPU Circulars or regional regulations that govern public space use or dispute resolution at the local level.

These regulations aim to uphold fairness and integrity in the democratic process while addressing the spread of hoaxes and Black Campaigns that can undermine the principles of fair and honest elections.

However, despite the legal measures, social media continues to facilitate the spread of false information, which can significantly influence public opinion and political conditions. The public plays an important role in identifying hoaxes and improving digital literacy. The government has taken regulatory steps, including the implementation of laws to address cybercrimes, and artificial intelligence is being used to detect and categorize harmful links. However, the government's policies still face several challenges, such as ineffective law enforcement and the absence of a comprehensive system to detect and control hoaxes consistently.

In conclusion, Black Campaigns have a significant impact on the electoral process in Indonesia, including the 2019 and 2024 elections. These campaigns, which spread false information, damage candidates' reputations, and increase social polarization, pose a challenge to the democratic process. Despite the government's efforts to regulate and address this issue through various legal frameworks, further improvements in coordination, law enforcement, and technology are needed to mitigate the negative impact of Black Campaigns. Strengthening digital literacy, establishing a consistent system for detecting hoaxes, and ensuring transparent enforcement of laws are crucial steps toward maintaining a fair and clean election process.

During the election and regional election process between 2019 and 2024, the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology identified 1,645 hoax contents from August 2018 to April 25, 2019, followed by 1,971 hoax news related to the 2024 General Election. These hoaxes are linked to the 2024 Simultaneous Elections. The use of social media as a tool for spreading Black Campaigns aims to influence the election results. This often happens, as in the 2019 election, when there were only two pairs of presidential and vice-presidential candidates: Number 1 for Jokowi and Ma'ruf Amin, and Number 2 for Prabowo and Sandiaga Uno. Candidate Number 2, Sandiaga Uno, became the target of a Black Campaign when a social media site called "Skandal Sandiaga" spread hoaxes about him. This Black Campaign is a significant concern for a peaceful and clean election, as we know it can lead to conflict between supporters of both sides. There are two factors that could trigger a Black Campaign: First, it could be conducted by a candidate's team if the candidate's popularity is lower than that of the opponent. Second, it could be done by the candidate's own team, claiming they have been wronged or slandered in the public sphere.

Another example of a Black Campaign occurred during the 2017 Jakarta Governor Election, where religious issues dominated political dynamics, leading to prolonged conflicts between opposing groups. Social division became unavoidable, with conflicts arising from interactions between individuals or specific groups.

A similar situation occurred in the 2019 election, involving presidential, legislative, and regional elections, with Black Campaigns conducted by both campaign teams and the public. One example is the case of three women from Karawang – Engkay Sugiarti, Ika Peranika, and Citra Widianingsih – who were arrested on February 24, 2019, for spreading a

Black Campaign against presidential and vice-presidential candidates Number 01, Joko Widodo and Ma'ruf Amin. They spread false claims that the pair would legalize LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender rights).

Another case involved Rahayu Saraswati Djojohadikusumo, a candidate for vice-mayor of South Tangerang, who became a target of a Black Campaign on social media. She was mocked on Facebook by an account named "Bang Djoel," which criticized a photo of her while pregnant, using derogatory language. These cases highlight the destructive impact of Black Campaigns on candidates' reputations and social harmony during political contests.

A recent example from the 2024 elections includes a post on Facebook claiming that the 2024 General Election had been postponed due to violations of the ethical code by the General Election Supervisory Board (DKPP) and that presidential and vice-presidential candidates Number 2, Prabowo Subianto and Gibran Rakabuming Raka, had been disqualified.

Black Campaigns in elections are minor human rights violations with harmful, domino-like effects, necessitating serious efforts to prevent violations caused by these campaigns. The National Human Rights Commission, as one of the law enforcers for human rights, needs to take these violations seriously and work towards enforcement. Black Campaigns have a significant impact on elections in Indonesia. Some of the most noticeable effects of non-transparent and non-fair elections are:

1. Low Voter Turnout: In the Pekanbaru regional election, the pair Septina-Erizal Muluk was not elected due to negative issues targeting Septina, such as accusations of power greed, attempting to perpetuate her family's power (dynastic politics), and the negative stigma that women should not be leaders.
2. Low Public Trust in the Election Process: Despite many voters being registered in the Voter List (DPT), many do not exercise their voting rights because they are outside the voting areas. Some also intentionally avoid voting at polling stations due to a lack of trust in the election process. One factor affecting this is the practice of giving gifts, such as basic food packages or money, to voters still undecided or "swing voters." Voters receiving these gifts tend to cast their votes for the candidates offering incentives, which worsens the image of the election as free and fair. Community assumptions indicate that many voters are influenced by money politics or transactional politics, which is concerning since high numbers of floating voters are often exploited to manipulate election results. The spread of hoaxes, especially during the 2019 Presidential Election, also exacerbates public distrust, with the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology identifying 771 fake news cases in 2018 and 2019.
3. Creation of Non-Transparent and Non-Fair Elections: The constitutional mandate for democratic elections must be followed by every institution involved, but if the election process does not adhere to the principles of fairness and transparency, it will result in the election of representatives,

regional leaders, and a president who are not trusted by the public. As a result, policies created by the winners will be hard to follow or implement.

The impact of Black Campaigns is profound, showing that they not only harm the democratic process but also damage candidates' reputations through the spread of false information, creating a negative perception in society. To address this, comprehensive measures are needed to combat hoaxes and Black Campaigns, including enhancing digital literacy, enforcing laws more strictly, and fostering cross-institutional collaboration to create a healthier and fairer political environment.

According to Law No. 7 of 2017 and KPU Regulation No. 15 of 2023, social media campaign regulations are outlined, including the timing, principles, materials, and methods of conducting campaigns. Key considerations for regulating social media during future elections include the campaign code of ethics, transparency in policies, data usage, and content control. The Ministry of Communication and Information Technology has also identified challenges in controlling political isolation during the 2019, 2020, and 2024 elections, focusing on combating hoaxes and misinformation that may disrupt voters. Moreover, there is an increased focus on controlling the use of identity politics and hoaxes, particularly regarding presidential candidates, in order to avoid disturbing voters.

Social media has become a significant tool in democracy, especially in political campaigns. However, it has also facilitated the rise of Black Campaigns that damage the principles of free, fair, and honest elections (Luber Jurdil). The spread of hoaxes, slander, and hate speech via social media often targets candidates, tarnishing their reputation, creating social conflicts, and undermining public trust in the election process. Black Campaigns not only affect election results but also worsen social polarization, as seen in various elections, including the 2017 Jakarta gubernatorial election and the 2024 general election. Additionally, practices such as giving incentives to undecided voters further damage the election's integrity, while the widespread hoaxes create distrust in the election process. Despite the government's implementation of regulations like Law No. 7 of 2017 and KPU Regulation No. 15 of 2023, challenges such as weak inter-institutional coordination, insufficient law enforcement, and limited technology to detect harmful content remain barriers in minimizing the negative impact of social media.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Social media plays a crucial role in modern political campaigns by providing an effective platform to introduce candidates, spread political messages, and gather public support. With technological advancements, social media enables the rapid and wide dissemination of information, which enhances political participation and transparency in the electoral process. However, the use of social media also presents significant challenges, such as the spread of false information, political polarization, and susceptibility to manipulation. Therefore, while social media holds great potential to strengthen democracy, it is essential to regulate and manage these platforms

carefully to minimize negative impacts, such as Black Campaigns and the spread of hoaxes. To address these challenges, stricter regulations, enhanced digital literacy among the public, and stronger law enforcement are necessary. Governments and relevant institutions must strengthen coordination and improve technological capabilities to detect and manage harmful content. This will help ensure that social media continues to serve as a positive and effective campaigning tool, supporting a fair and transparent democratic process.

#### **FURTHER STUDY**

It is advised that readers research this subject further by consulting supplementary materials such as books, scholarly journals, and reliable websites. Attending webinars, online classes, or seminars can yield practical experience and valuable knowledge. Participating in forums, discussion groups, or professional communities can also provide networking possibilities and a variety of viewpoints. By reading relevant case studies and publications, going to conferences, or keeping up with industry experts' updates, you can also learn more and stay up to date on new developments.

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