



The Influence of Social Media on Legal Changes in Society: A Perspective

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Abstract— Social media is currently the most influential medium, impacting legal changes in society. For that reason, it is necessary to study the form and influence of social media on legal changes in society. This research aims to produce a model of the relationship between social media influence and legal changes. This research employs a socio-legal method incorporating other disciplines to support its arguments. This research also examines legal comparisons by contrasting the relationship between social media models and legal changes in the United States. The findings of this research are the design of a reciprocal relationship model between social media and the law itself, where social media influences law enforcement. In contrast, the law places social media as a control.

Keywords—*Influence, Legal Changes, Social Media*

I. INTRODUCTION

Social media is the most influential medium today. All human activities take place in the realm of social media. Social media can influence and change various aspects of human life, which also applies to law. The lack of legal awareness regarding the use of social media has negative impacts. Hate speech, hoaxes, and bullying have become negative aspects of the development of social media.[1] The issue that arises is that the public often does not realize that activities conducted on social media can lead to legal violations because the public understands that social media is a platform for self-expression.[2] As Rizana et al. stated, the development of social media also impacts the formation of new legal actions[3] that can bring about changes in the legal behavior of society itself.

Social changes in societal behaviour add a unique dimension to legal reform. As stated by Tongat et al., legal reform is not solely about contextual renewal but also about the values of the law itself.[4] This is what can bring about fundamental change, because social change is an important part of making changes to the value system. The development of communication media as a form of information technology development can become the main medium in terms of changing values. It cannot be denied that social media has a positive impact, and in its development, social media often influences changes in behaviour, attitudes, and morals of its users, potentially leading to positive societal values.

The Ministry of Communication and Information Technology revealed that the number of internet users in Indonesia currently reaches 63 million people. Of that number, 95 percent use the Internet to access social networks. According to data from Weber Shandwick, a public relations and communication services company, Indonesia has around 65 million active Facebook users. There are 33 million active users daily, 55 million active users accessing it via mobile devices monthly, and around 28 million active users accessing it via mobile devices daily. Based on data from PT Bakrie Telecom, Twitter users have 19.5 million users in Indonesia out of a total of 500 million global users.

This data provides a fascinating picture of Indonesian society as an active social media user. In 2022, hoax cases regarding COVID-19 dominated social media. The total spread of hoaxes was 5,486, and 5,299 of them had been blocked, with details from the Ministry of Communication and Information showing that 4,781 COVID-19 hoaxes on Facebook had 4,630 blocked and 151 were being followed up. Then, 573 COVID-19 hoaxes on Twitter, with 561 blocked and 12 being followed up. Lastly, there are 55 COVID-19 hoaxes on YouTube, with 54 blocked and one being followed up. This can become an interesting phenomenon, where society easily believes everything from social media without verifying its truth and then spreads activities as part of publishing the hoaxes, eventually leading to legal issues. The depiction of this phenomenon serves as the basis for this research, which aims to obtain forms and models of the influence of social media on legal changes in society.

This research is intended to produce findings in the form of a relational model concerning the influence of social media and legal changes related to societal values. Previous research has largely focused on the impact and phenomenon of social media as a form of social change, whereas this study discusses the influence of social media on legal changes, examining the impact of social media in effecting changes from the formation to the enforcement of laws. As expressed by A. Rafiq, who mentioned that changes in social relationships or changes in the equilibrium of social relationships and all forms of changes in social institutions within a society, which affect its social system, including values, attitudes, and patterns of behaviour among groups in society.[5] In addition, Anang Sugeng Cahyono stated that the influence of social media has both positive and negative impacts, but these changes are viewed from various perspectives, including social, economic, and cultural.[6] Previous research has focused more on the social changes brought about by the presence of social media, but has not yet examined its impact on the law itself. This issue is urgent to study in order to obtain a relational model regarding the influence of social media and legal changes in society, underlining its importance and relevance.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Social Media Concept

In this era of technological advancement, information can be quickly disseminated through the internet. Social media is a tangible technological advancement that the internet has brought about. Various social media platforms are now utilized to convey various information, allowing the public to easily search for and obtain the information they need. Social media is not only for the general public; it also provides convenience for an organization or company in disseminating information they want to convey to the public. With all the conveniences of today's technology, disseminating information has become very fast. Now, with the ease of internet access as a manifestation of technological advancement, its users can become more widespread in society.[7] Social media greatly increases the volume of user-generated content and makes it available to anyone at any time, amplifying its impact. It offers users a convenient place to communicate with others quickly and cheaply, and thus, social media has become a popular platform for exchanging information with one another.[8]

Social media is an online platform that connects its users in the exchange of knowledge, information, opinions, and participation with anyone and anywhere. Humans, who initially could only befriend and communicate with people around them, can now reach people from different islands, countries, and continents using social media. Social media connects people with different backgrounds. The interconnectedness of diverse people on social media changes human mindsets, behaviors, and needs. Social media also plays a role in the dissemination of information. Based on a study by Nurly Melinda, social media plays a vital role in disseminating academic information. People prefer to search for information on social media rather than official websites. The tendency to use social media compared to other media makes social media the right choice for disseminating information.[9]

B. Legal Changes in Society

Social changes in societal behaviour add a unique dimension to legal reform. As stated by Tongat et al., legal reform is not solely about contextual renewal but also about the values of the law itself.[4] This is what can bring about fundamental change, because social change is an important part of making changes to the value system. The development of communication media as a form of information technology development can become the main medium in terms of changing values. It cannot be denied that social media has a positive impact, and in its development, social media often influences changes in behaviour, attitudes, and morals of its users, potentially leading to positive societal values.

Alterations in social conditions, technology, knowledge, values, and attitudes, then, may induce legal change. In such instances, the law is reactive and follows social change. It should be noted, however, that changes in law are one of many responses to social change. But the legal response in some respects is important, because it represents the authority of the state and its sanctioning power. A new law in response to a new social or technological problem may help to alleviate the problem, but it may also aggravate that problem. Often, the legal response to social change, which inevitably comes after a time lag, induces new social changes.

III. METHOD

The research method used in this writing is socio-legal research. This type of research is interdisciplinary, a hybrid of extensive studies on legal science and sciences about law from a societal perspective. This research is needed to explain how the law works in the lives of community members. This research uses a qualitative approach by conducting a legal comparison and utilizing secondary data from both legal disciplines and interdisciplinary fields.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. *The Development of Social Media as a Means of Legal Change*

The change in law occurs from various aspects, including the influence of social change. Ultimately, legal changes are intertwined with social changes. Social changes can alter the fundamental foundations of legal values, as social changes can originate from both internal and external spheres of society itself. Internal sources occur, for example, population growth, population decline, the discovery of new technology, the presence of conflict, or perhaps the occurrence of a revolution, while external changes, for example, natural disasters, cultural influences, war, etc.[10] At this time, technological development can be one of the forms of significant legal changes. From a social perspective, social media, as part of this new technological discovery, impacts social change. The positive impact of social media presence includes facilitating interactions with many people, expanding social circles, shortening distance and time, allowing self-expression, and the easy and quick dissemination of all kinds of information at a meager cost.

On the other hand, the negative impact includes a tendency to reduce physical interactions, both in face-to-face forms and distancing people who are already close, the emergence of conflicts, and internet addiction behavior. This influence not only plays a role in the social field but also terms of changes in values, norms, and laws, making social media an attractive medium for legal changes. Social media can act as a double-edged sword that can help but also turn destructive.

As expressed by Rofi Wahanisa et al., *social media, which is increasingly developing, enables information to spread out quickly in society. Any kind of information can be easily and quickly distributed to influence perspectives, lifestyle, and culture.*[11] The rapidly growing social media allows information to spread quickly in society. Information can be easily and quickly distributed to influence perspectives, lifestyles, and cultures. Cultural changes have a significant impact on the presence of social media, and legal changes emerge as a culture that occurs due to the influence of society as netizens. In modern times, social change plays a role in legal changes; law and social change have a very close relationship; they are interdependent.[12]

On the one hand, social change accompanies the law; on the other hand, sometimes, legal principles adapt to specific social changes. Social media is one form of social change that occurs because of the development of the digital age. Various methods and approaches in social media lead to the realization of a comprehensive change mechanism, including legal norms and the values contained within them, because the social changes attempted through law are a fundamental trait of the modern world.

Social media has become an interesting phenomenon as the frontline regarding legal changes. The value of social change contained in the perspective of the presence of social media illustrates that society wants to showcase a new role of people's power in maintaining the law by its essence, which is justice. Changes related to social media are not only happening in Indonesia; the United States is also one of the countries that uses social media to influence changes, such as terrorism propaganda. The American politician Ted Poe, in an article titled "Time to silence terrorists on social media," criticizes Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Poe mentioned that the social media platform is like a giant megaphone that Al Qaeda and NIIS/ISIS use every day to broadcast their claims, justifications, and calls for jihad to the entire world.

Social media in the United States not only has negative impacts, but there are also several murder cases and other serious crimes that have helped the courts provide evidence that is difficult to present during trials, such as the murder case of Abraham Shakespeare, animal cruelty, hit-and-run cases, the pedophilia case of Kenneth Siders, and the student murder case that was revealed after 26 years. Various cases in the United States illustrate that social media can play an important role in the judicial process by providing evidence of criminal acts so that complex cases can be substantiated through social media.

B. *Legal Cases in Indonesia That Impact Legal Changes*

As a country that keeps up with the development of information technology, Indonesian society is very active on social media. Various behaviors of Indonesian netizens enliven the virtual world. The rapid development of technology also leads to the rise of cybercrime and online privacy issues, which can significantly disrupt the social system within a community. The laws that are formed can influence the continuity of a social system within a community. The law is binding on every individual. With the binding law, all forms of societal activities, whether positive or negative, will be controlled by the law.[13] Ideally, it is the law that should govern society, but in the development of the modern world, there are some legal events that are the opposite.

As mentioned by Lidwina Inge Nurtjahyo, essential issues in the field of law and society that are changing due to globalization and the pandemic, including issues that are part of social media use, such as gender-based violence in the digital space, body shaming, or the dissemination of intimate content as a tool for extortion against women, or sexual harassment using social media.[14] Lidwina further elaborated that the focus of attention in

legal studies from a socio-legal perspective using digital legal ethnography remains within the legal context; how humans engage with the law is inseparable from the context of society and its culture, however, with the development of technology and how humans construct culture that follows the development of that technology.[14] Thus, it can be examined that in this digital technology era, law, society, and culture, including social interactions, intersect and often influence each other.

In Indonesia, the role of social media is quite crucial in terms of legal reforms. Several viral cases on social media have led to changes in applicable laws or impacted court trials. Some of those cases include, *first*, an event that impacts changes in government policy. The Bali provincial government has finally issued a policy in response to the many foreign tourists who have drawn the attention of netizens for their inappropriate behavior and violations of Balinese laws and culture, such as reckless driving without helmets. There are also actions by tourists that desecrate the sacred areas in Bali. As a result of Ni Luh Djelantik's social media post regarding the behavior of foreign tourists, which had a positive impact, the immigration authorities finally processed those tourists, and some were eventually deported. In addition, the Governor of Bali also proposes to the Central Government to revoke the visa on arrival (VoA) for Russian and Ukrainian citizens who wish to visit Bali, as most foreign tourists are Russian and Ukrainian nationals. The influence of social media is also felt in Padang, due to the viral nature of government policies or programs related to the Permindo Night Market. These programs or activities were not only created through discussions with the younger generation but also in response to their feedback on social media. The Padang city government issued a regional investment policy in response to the viral issue of the abundance of food containing haram ingredients. The Padang city government implemented a halal labeling policy on every food product, showing the significant influence of the younger generation on policy-making.[15]

Second, law enforcement in Indonesia. Several law enforcement actions, from the arrest process to the trial, have come under public scrutiny through social media, thereby affecting the law enforcement process, like the case of Jessica Kumala Wongso, who was accused of murdering her friend Wayan Mirna Salihin using cyanide. At that time, Jessica's trial attracted public attention because television media broadcast the trial process live, which, in principle, had never been done regarding law enforcement efforts. Discussions on social media are always high, and the hashtag #SidangJessica was tweeted more than 24,000 times during one of the hearings. The Indonesian Broadcasting Commission (KPI) stated that media coverage related to Jessica's trial for the murder of her friend, Mirna, affects the presumption of innocence principle, including mass media discussions that put pressure on the court and law enforcement to find the perpetrator of Mirna's murder quickly.

Furthermore, the legal case of the murder of Brigadier Joshua (J) by Ferdy Sambo has generated negative views among netizens in the comments section of detik.com, which produced news coverage of the Ferdy Sambo case. These opposing views were responded to with several reports regarding the alleged fabrication of Brigadier J's murder by Ferdy Sambo. This also resulted in the designation of Ferdy Sambo as a suspect by the Indonesian National Police (Polri) and his dishonorable discharge (PTDH) from the Polri institution. Essentially, the news coverage that reflected these negative views catalyzed netizens to adopt a critical stance towards the Ferdy Sambo case, which is positive for law enforcement as it leads to continuous oversight by netizens.[16] The presence of netizens in the Ferdy Sambo case serves as a form of social control by the community, ensuring that law enforcement achieves the justice expected by the public. Another case that highlights the critical role of netizens is the assault case involving Mario Dandi Satriyo, which led to the revelation of his father, Rafael Alun Trisambodo's corruption case. Rafael is an official in the Directorate General of Taxes (Ditjen Pajak) of the Ministry of Finance, whom the KPK subsequently arrested. This was a result of the assault case committed by Mario Dandi Satriyo against David, which he showcased on social media. As a result, netizens conducted investigations and exposed Mario Dandi's lavish lifestyle, flaunting luxury cars that pointed to his father, a civil servant in the Ministry of Finance.

The presence of social media can change the formation and enforcement of laws. The public controls the government and law enforcement very strictly. When the public sees that the law has shown unfair bias, netizens move through social media in an effort to make the case go viral, resulting in demands and pressure to enforce the law fairly.

C. The Role of Social Media in Legal Changes

Social media, a key player in the changes in various fields of life, including law, must be held to a higher standard. It is crucial to address the fact that some content and news are merely hoaxes. This underscores the need for social media to function like mass media, capable of providing balanced news through structured interviews and valid sources. As Muhammad Mustofa, as quoted by Eka Nugraha Putra, argues, the mass media tends to give more coverage to street crimes compared to major crimes such as white-collar crime and organized crime. Both

are crimes, but white collar crime and organized crime pose a greater danger to society. This comparison highlights the need for social media to provide balanced and accurate information.[17]

The role of social media today also influences the government itself. Besides being a medium or tool, there are several roles of social media for the government, namely: (1) social media is designed to maintain and enhance the institution's reputation and to explore public aspirations, (2) social media serves as a means for the government to be closer to the public. Government public relations must be able to keep up with the pace of social media, communicate directly, and respond promptly. (3) social media serves as online documentation. Considering its open nature, government public relations must be able to determine what information is appropriate and inappropriate to convey to the public and how to communicate it. (4) Social media reaches a vast audience, so understanding the dissemination of information and cross-cultural communication is necessary. Social media also benefits the government as a state policymaker apparatus. Based on the above explanation, social media has an essential influence on legal changes. Legal events that emerge as news and go viral will become legal events that eventually receive a prompt response for follow-up actions.

As expressed by Roscoe Pound with the concept of Social Engineering, legal experts and judges must abandon their rigid attitudes in understanding the law and must accommodate the changes occurring in society so that the law can bridge the creation of satisfaction in fulfilling the interests and aspirations of the community and minimize social friction. In this context, Pound defined interests as claims wants, desires, and community expectations.[18] Based on Roscoe Pound's concept of social engineering, the current development of information technology can bring about changes to satisfy the community's sense of justice as it should be in the law. The influence of social media can become a crucial indicator to assist the law when it has reached an impasse, as some problematic legal cases to uncover in the real world can find supporting evidence through the virtual world. This is why social media should ideally become one of the auxiliary indicators for the law. However, filtering of news on social media must still be implemented to avoid hoax news.

Based on the overall presentation, the study regarding the positive influence of social media on legal changes can be divided into several categories, namely: (1) Social Media can serve as a legal tool/means to obtain evidence; (2) Social media can act as social control over the behavior of law enforcement officers; (3) Social media can influence the judiciary to adjudicate as maximally as possible and produce fair verdicts; (4) Social media can be a platform for the community to participate in expressing their aspirations related to justice and law; (5) Social Media can be a means to monitor every legal action that has not yet, has, and will enter the judicial realm, thereby creating clean law. However, the influence of social media also brings negative stigma, namely: (1) The pressure from netizens can affect the law enforcement process, so often to avoid negative stigma from netizens, the law enforcement process is forced to follow public opinion and desires; (2) The news that appears often lacks comparison, making it difficult to distinguish between actual news and mere hoaxes, which is something that netizens need to pay attention to and respond to more wisely; (3) Social media can criminalize someone with news that sways public opinion.

The influence of social media has become a new form of participatory law, as the current aspirations of society are very open and extensive. All forms of netizen reporting can become a source of legal events because sometimes even perpetrators of crimes now openly exploit their criminal behavior on social media. Therefore, the model of the relationship between the influence of social media and legal changes is very close because sometimes the law requires the presence of social media to accompany it, and vice versa; social media filtering also requires the law to regulate it.

V. CONCLUSION

Social media has become an inseparable part of the law, but the law also needs to regulate the behavior of netizens on social media. Social media often facilitate various legal events to achieve resolutions or the latest developments. Thus, the model of the relationship between social media and legal changes is powerful; this time, social media can influence law enforcement, while the law places social media as a form of control.

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