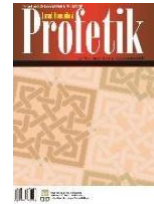




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The Fall of Public Relations Officer and the Rise of Influencer in the Indonesian Government

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ABSTRACT

The presence of Public Relations Officers in the organization is a must because they're responsible for establishing good relations between the organization and stakeholders. Good relations between these two will result in harmony. This is a key factor in the success of various programs implemented by the organization. However, it seems that now the role of Public Relations Officers of the Republic of Indonesia Government has begun to decline and be replaced by Influencers starting from the end of 2019 to mid-2020. This research is a case study to describe how the Public Relations Officer of the government of the Republic of Indonesia lost its main function, being heavily replaced by influencers promoting Omnibus Law on social media. Influencers can be a respectable profession if they maintain their quality as public communicators. First, influencers need to have qualifications and competencies relevant to their field. Second, influencers hired by government agencies openly convey to the public that the message sent is a form of a commercial public campaign. Third, government agencies that use influencer services also need to meet the qualifications and competency standards of the influencers they choose. The conclusion is that the government prefers to maximize the function of influencers so that the Omnibus Law gets support from the community rather than



maximizing Public Relations Officer. However, the use of influencers must be accompanied by good communication. With this, we can hope that the influencers will develop into a public communication actor that is respectable and acceptable.

INTRODUCTION

The Government has an essential role in the progress of a nation or country. Through the Government, all policies are made to fulfill the interests of the people or citizens. These aims and intentions are often considered wrong by some people. According to them, what the Government is doing is limited to rhetoric and propaganda efforts to perpetuate its power. Therefore, it is necessary to make communication efforts made by the Government and its citizens to create mutual understanding through public relations activities.

Public relations in government are usually referred to as Public Affairs, Information Officers, or Public Relations Officers. Scott M. Cutlip, Aleen H. Center, Glen M. Broom, define Government Public Relations as "a management function that helps agencies, departments, and other public entities be responsive to the citizens they serve." (Cutlip et al., 2006).

In Indonesia, the existence of public relations has been regulated by the Decree of the Minister of Communication and Informatics in 2007 concerning the Code of Ethics for Public Relations, which states that government public relations is all action taken by an agency or government to foster harmonious relations with internal and external audiences and promote the dignity of the institution or government in the view of internal and external audiences to gain understanding, trust, cooperation, and support from internal and external audiences in carrying out

their primary duties and functions. (Kode Etik Humas Pemerintahan, 2007).

Government Public Relations is a particular part of the Public Relations specialization that carries out management functions to build and maintain harmonious relationships to serve and influence public policy to gain understanding, trust, cooperation, and support from internal and external audiences. Besides, Government Public Relations is in charge of implementing available procedures and public services. In public policy, public relations is tasked with providing various information about government policies that bind the public. In public assistance, public relations is tasked with providing the best service possible, with a bureaucracy that quickly gives satisfaction to the community. so that the world of government gets a positive image and reputation (Graham & Avery, 2013). However, it seems that government public relations in Indonesia is losing its function and being replaced by Buzzer's role in the discussion of a law that discusses the fate of workers.

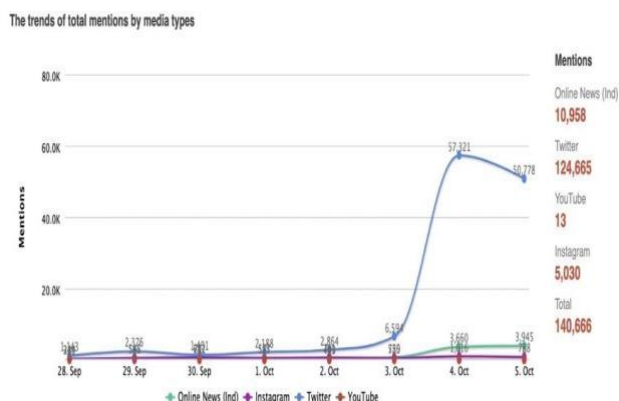
So far, all matters concerning the rights and obligations of laborers and workers in Indonesia are regulated by Law Number 13 of 2003 concerning Manpower. At the end of 2019, the Indonesian government drafted a new regulation regarding employment and investment in Indonesia called the Omnibus Law. The emergence of the Omnibus Law was in the spotlight because it received a lot of criticism from Indonesia's labor activists. Labor activists consider that the Omnibus Law is more



beneficial to company owners and investors, ignoring labor rights and raising various other agricultural problems. Not to mention that labor activists feel that the government and parliament are dishonest and do not want to be open in the formulation of this law. (Indonesia For Global Justice, 2020). This refusal led to the emergence of various demonstrations by workers and students in different regions in Indonesia (Rakhmat & Nurhayati, 2020).

In the virtual world, based on data collection conducted by Drone Emprit, as shown in Figure 1, the discussion of the Omnibus Law has become a trending topic in Indonesia.

Figure 1. Omnibus Law conversation spike on Twitter



Source: Fahmi (2020)

In Figure 1, it can be seen that so far, the discussion about the Omnibus Law has only ranged from two thousand tweets per day, but on October 4, it jumped to 57,000 tweets; this significant increase was triggered when the Indonesian Parliament held a meeting to ratify the Omnibus Law. Based on the author's information, there were efforts by some party cadres to support the government coalition, who tried to voice their defense

against the Omnibus Law. Still, it turned out that the wave of rejection of the Omnibus Law was huge; this can be seen in Figure 2, based on Drone Emprit's monitoring; the number of people who refused outnumbered government supporters.

Figure 2. Comparison of Supporters and Opponents of Omnibus Law in Twitter based on Social Network Analysis (SNA)



Source: Fahmi (2020)

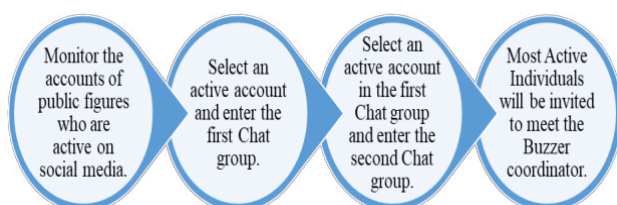
Figure 2 shows that the cluster that rejects the Omnibus Law in the SNA map is vast, consisting of various elements of the government's opposition political parties, the labor alliance, the student alliance, environmental activists, and the mass media. Meanwhile, the omnibus law support cluster is very small. To deal with the wave of rejection of the Omnibus Law, which is getting bigger every day, the Indonesian government has recruited several public figures to counter the opinion that the Omnibus Law has a good effect on workers' welfare.

The influencers chosen to build a positive opinion on the Omnibus Law are those who have been carefully selected. Based on the author's information, the government carried out several levels of screening; in Figure 3, it can be seen how this screening was carried out. This is



done to ensure that those who are recruited do have high social media activity.

Figure 3. Several levels of screening to get Buzzer



Source: Author's compilation (2021)

At this point, the Public Relations Officer within the Indonesian government has lost his function. They are no longer at the forefront of providing education and explanations to the public regarding this law; they no longer have the confidence to comfort people who have been worried about government policies. Their role has been replaced by public figures who have many followers in cyberspace.

METHODOLOGY

This paper contains a qualitative descriptive, one type of study that is included in qualitative research. Research has the goal of describing phenomena, variables, and any facts or events that occurred during the data collection process. This study describes the interpretation of the data on the phenomena that occur, the views and attitudes that occur in society, the intermediary between existing facts and their influence on a condition, and so on. The purpose of this study will be to answer the problems that have been stated previously. Activities in compiling

this research include data collection, data analysis, data interpretation, and finally a formulation that is concluded refers to the data analysis. (Sugiyono, 2013). The author collects various references related to Omnibus Law on Twitter social media from various hashtags that support Omnibus Law on social media and then explores them using Social Network Analysis (SNA). Communication in social media is communication between actors, which has a different pattern of interaction with implicit information. The design of interaction between actors What happens on social media is interesting to observe (Can & Alatas, 2019). Social Network Analysis (SNA) illustrates the interaction between actors and other actors in social interaction. The exchange can be different depending on how you look at it and the results you want to get. From one object to another, there are many types of social networking. Mapping and measuring interaction flow is equipped with an analysis of the interaction flow pattern defined as Social Network Analysis.

The presence of SNA is useful in reading the dynamics of interaction between social network users because their relative position with other actors can be recognized in the scale and perspective for later analysis. In the network pattern, propagation information no longer comes from one person then moving down, but already in the form of a network topology related to each other (interdependent). Consequently, the central limit theorem states that the mean of all samples from the population that is equal will be equivalent to the mean value of the population, which does not apply when interdependence occurs (Tabassum et al., 2018). The SNA method can analyze patterns in paths, neighborhoods, and density, centrality, peripherality, centralization, component,



component core, click, positions, sets, clusters, network dynamics and changes over time, and the dimensions. To understand that SNA is the starting point of a study process, not the final result, SNA, like sentiment analysis, reduces the possibility that the appearance of white noise is influenced by the timing and duration of data retrieval. In addition, SNA is a set of math-based calculations with visual output (Yousefi Nooraie et al., 2020). This gives birth to the advantages and disadvantages. Profit because the data in the form of images will facilitate interpretation.

SNA is an analytical approach that can identify social structures and explain the position of the main stakeholders, or what can be called key actors. Key actors can become significant in disseminating information, especially for government or political actors, to promote ideas on social media because it has the most considerable effect in spreading information on social networks. This research uses tweet data with the hashtag # OmnibusLaw on the Twitter social network as a dataset. The dataset will be processed and used for knowledge extraction activities on the Twitter social network using SNA. The steps for data collection and processing, namely: First, determine the hashtag to be used as a benchmark of data collection in social networks like Twitter; Second, collect tweet data using hashtags related to the Omnibus Law; Third, normalize data by making relationships between tweet actors based on retweets, replies, and mentions, which is then processed and made into the SNA graph; Fourth, application of level centrality (degree centrality) to determine the leading actor in the spread of the news, which was then continued by extracting knowledge to see the distribution and exchange of information between actors; fifth,

application of intermediary centrality to determine the key actor and boundary spanner of relationship linkages between generated networks by the leading actor.

By using the Omnibus Law keyword, it will be seen how influencers are maximized to build public opinion that supports the ratification of the Omnibus Law. This data was then used to make this paper. From there, it can be seen the maximum efforts made by influencers to introduce the omnibus law on social media and provide a counter opinion on every tweet that rejects the omnibus law.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Influencer As Digital Communication Agent

The rise of digital communication activities, especially in social media, has spawned various activities and new terms, such as influencers and buzzers, which are very likely to be interpreted differently by the public. Both are actors in digital communication. But in the process, it has different characteristics. From the perspective of communication studies, the term influencer can be traced to celebrity endorsement, which uses famous figures (artists, supermodels, etc.) to promote specific products, brands, or services. (Fadillah et al., 2019b).

An influencer is someone whose opinion is listened to, trusted, and makes others react afterward (Belanche et al., 2021). So, if we conclude, an influencer has creativity and innovation that can be enjoyed and relied on to make other people react after seeing what he did. In general, influencers start by managing and using social media to express their creativity and innovation. The influencers have a high quantity of followers or audiences and have a strong influence on their followers.



These influencers operate through trusted online networks and communities and have a significant impact due to their vast and growing networks. This trend means public relations officers face a fantastic spectrum of new communication channels. Not a few organizations are getting rid of the existence of public relations officers and replacing them with influencers. They consider that the presence of influencers is more important than the presence of a public relations officer, even though the work of influencers is only a tiny part of the primary function of the public relations officer.

These celebrities influence people's desire to use or even buy the product being promoted through their positive image and popular characteristics. Various studies have shown that famous figures are beneficial in conveying promotional messages to the broader community. Today, as the use of the internet and social media increases, the practice of celebrity endorsements is not only limited to 'traditional' celebrities. It is also beginning to spread to so-called micro-celebrities, namely people gaining popularity and having a massive social media following. Social media influencers can be defined as celebrities ("traditional" or "micro-celebrities") who have a high popularity and a relatively large following on social media (Jandevi, 2019a). In a political context, political actors, both in government and political parties, are also starting to realize that social media and influencers can shape public opinion to gain majority support. It can also be used to win general election competitions at various levels (Jandevi, 2019b).

The use and control of opinion on social media has proven to be essential and can affect public trust and government performance. Various

empirical evidence of this can also be found in multiple election cases in multiple countries, such as Facebook's successful use in the campaign to raise support for Barack Obama in the 2008 election in the US. (Lotan, 2019), and the phenomenon of social media use in the 2014 and 2019 Presidential Elections in Indonesia (Fadillah et al., 2019a). Unlike influencers, the buzzer phenomenon leads to social media communication activities that aim to enliven conversations and convey opinions or issues repeatedly, either paid or voluntarily (Gunawan & Salamah, 2018). The buzzer role can be played by anyone on social media. In Indonesia's current political situation, the buzzer phenomenon is often colored by social media accounts that are anonymous, fake, or even robotic accounts. They echo and raise a particular issue and appear aggressively to dispel the other problems or opinions by justifying various means, such as using harsh language (swearing) and even killing the character of other parties who have different ideas. This, of course, cannot be tolerated (Winata et al., 2017).

There are three interesting trends that we can see today, including the number of young people who are digital natives and who are increasingly influencing the digital universe. The results of a survey conducted by a well-known toy company, Lego, in 2019 stated that 30% of children aged 8–12 years in the US, UK, and China aspire to become YouTubers or vloggers as adults. (Tait, 2019). Many of them have the potential to develop into influencers.

Of course, we can see the same trend happening in Indonesia as well. During the last few years, there has been a strong trend of influencers being used by government officials and political organizations' leaders in the Republic of



Indonesia. Karolina and Luthfia (2019). The practice of using influencers and buzzers in government public communication activities is inevitable. However, in the life of a democratic country, anyone who becomes an actor and carries out public communication activities is required to uphold differences and freedom of opinion. The use of influencers and buzzers can hurt governments. Influencers have not yet fully developed into a public communication profession with competency standards and public communication ethics. (Gunawan & Salamah, 2018). In the future, it is possible that influencers could develop into a promising profession. Of course, to prepare for this, regulatory standards, competence, and compliance with certain public communication norms and ethics must be met by an influencer. Pérez-Curiel and Naharro (2019)

The Movement of Influencers Who Support the Omnibus Law

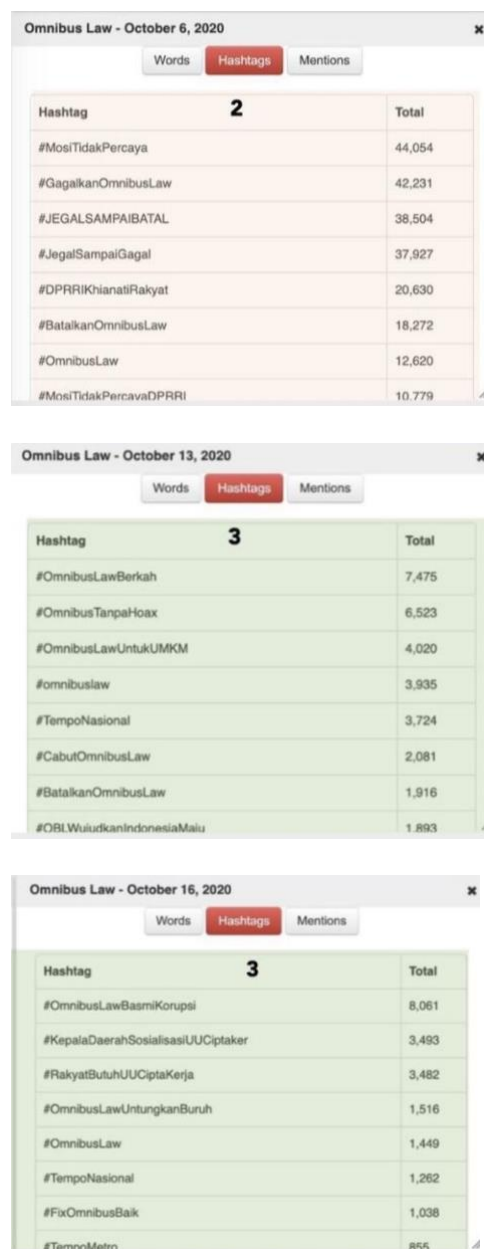
Based on the information from BBC News Indonesia, there are many public figures officially recruited by the Indonesian government; the amount of payment they get varies, between five million and ten million rupiahs in one tweet. The total state budget issued by the Indonesian government for recruiting these public figures reached 90 billion Rupiah, or the equivalent of USD 6,145,000 (BBC News, 2020).

The mobilization of public figures as social media buzzers succeeded in suppressing the Omnibus Law's rejection on social media launched by students, environmental activists, and labor alliances. In Figure 4, you can see a shift in the dominance of trending topics related to the Omnibus Law in Indonesia; immediately, within days, the support of

the Omnibus Law dominates on social media.

Figure 4. The shift in the Domination of Support for the Omnibus Law





Source: Fahmi (2020)

In Figure 4 it can be seen that since October 4, 2020, there has been an increase in the number of Talks regarding the Omnibus Law, as for the hashtag that dominates is #BatalkanOmnibusLaw, #RakyatButuhKerja, #DemokratTolakRUUCiptaker and various other forms of rejection which reached a hundred thousand tweets. Then on October 5, 2020, the resistance

movement reached its peak, where the structure of rejection reached five hundred thousand tweets. The virtual world is filled with expressions of rejection of the Omnibus Law and provides encouragement and enthusiasm for activists who demonstrate against the Omnibus Law.

However, it was not until a week later that a hashtag containing support for the Omnibus Law appeared, which slowly dominated social media tweets, including #OmnibuslawBerkah, @OmnibuslawTanpaHoax, and @OmnibusLawUntukUMKM. These various hashtags state that the Omnibus Law will be useful to Indonesia's people because it will be a solution to the problem of the lack of employment in Indonesia and other employment problems.

In Figure 5, it is finally seen that the hashtags echoed by influencers have succeeded in controlling the opinion that has developed on social media. The discussion about #OmnibusLawBasmiKorupsi (Omnibus Law eliminates corruption), #KepalaDaerahSosialisasiUUCiptakerja (Regional Heads Socialization of Omnibus Law), #RakyatButuhUUCiptaKerja (People Need Omnibus Law), #Omnibus Law Benefits Workers) and so on has succeeded in drowning out the issues of resistance to this law.

Figure 5. The shift in Hashtag Dominance related to the Omnibus Law

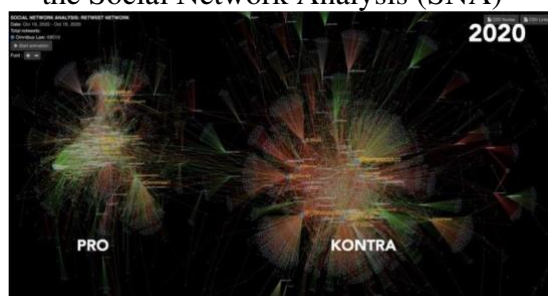




Source: Fahmi (2020)

The results can be seen in Figure 6. Although the number has not yet surpassed the votes of those who rejected the Omnibus Law, in less than two weeks, the number of support for the Omnibus Law's existence has increased very significantly. In the SNA contained in Figure 6, the difference can be seen considerably when compared to the SNA in Figure 1.

Figure 6. The Amount of Support for the Omnibus Law has increased based on the Social Network Analysis (SNA)



Source: Fahmi (2020)

They succeeded in driving opinions and muting a large number of counter-government views in a short period, a job that only influencers on social media seem to be able to do, something that the current public relations officers in Indonesia cannot do.

Influencers Become Propaganda Agents, Not Public Relations Functions

Several times, influencers' issues have often surfaced in Indonesian politics after digital media has proven to be a significant stage in political communication in the modern era. Blumber and Kavanagh, as quoted by Ward & Cahill (2009), call this time the age of the emergence of third-generation political communication.

The first generation uses a lot of informal face-to-face power, *and the second generation* relies on dominating mainstream media such as TV, newspapers, radio magazines, and others. In contrast, the *third* generation depends upon the power of interactivity and a multimedia platform that allows people to be mutually linked without having to meet beforehand physically. So from that, there is a term that says this is the era of new media.

In the development of the new media era, influencers can also be said to be netizens because influencers are also included as internet citizens. Still, the writer analogizes that influencers are the king of "netizens" because they can influence citizens' public opinion through the internet.

Then, people who are active on social media, or more colloquially known as netizens, are divided into four typologies in the context of political communication: first, disseminators, who usually disseminate daily information, share patterns, and connect so that their ideas, invitations, or attitudes are known and can be followed by others. *The second is the publicist*, usually building a positive image for popularity with political contestation, such as political marketing through social media. *Third, propagandists* who always practice propaganda techniques to delegitimize their opponents while strengthening their legitimacy through the internet. *The fourth is hacktivism*, which is hacking



and breaking into accounts, situations, and other internet-based information.

Judging from the typology mentioned above, it seems that influencers' interests are more used for propagandist typology, which has the aim of influencing netizens. That is why influencers are often looked at by corporations and government agencies to carry out marketing and other interests, such as building public opinion.

But in this case, is it appropriate for influencers to be used who intersect with regulatory issues full of political interests? Because seeing from the point about Influencers promoting campaigns indicated by the case of Omnibus Law, in the end, the influencers managed to balance out the opinion that rejected Omnibus Law, but does it provide good political education to the people? Given the influencer deployment, it seems as if the Government wants to silence the voices of the people who refuse without opening space for discussion and seem impatient to educate the people regarding this law's importance.

From a political perspective, especially for the development of public opinion regarding political issues and the lives of many people, the use of influencer services is not appropriate, especially since these influencers are not from labor and humanitarian activists, but from entertainment artists who, according to the author are no longer relevant to discussing political and legal issues related investment and employment such as the Omnibus Law.

Influencers are needed to facilitate promotions, which are commercial products, and not develop public opinion, which is a political issue, especially with a high level of debate. In building public opinion, government agencies must have confidence in their agency's public relations team to

disseminate information to the public. Because if a government agency wants to have a reasonable opinion in society about a problem, then the government must make a political product that is sufficiently mature, siding with the community and also involving the community. This is an essential thing that government agencies must hold firmly by informing reasonable public opinion in society, not using influencer services.

Suppose government agencies use the services of influencers to build public opinion. In that case, this creates a question mark and a doubt because there is something wrong with this political product in society, so that opinion must be promoted using the influencer's services. Therefore, politics is a business of hope; to manage excellent political issues in an organization does not require using complicated techniques. The key is to collect good hopes for the community, involve the city in the manufacture of political products, and also be pro-community so that the development of public opinion on specific political issues will be easy and, of course, right in the eyes of the city.

The government and politicians who use influencers to support the ratification of the Omnibus law do not realize that what they need is the role of the Public Relations Officer. The function of public relations is to serve public relations' interests, maintain good communication, and ensure that practical public relations activities carried out must focus on morals and good behavior. In this way, the organization's public-related objectives will be achieved, and the organization's positive image will be maintained. It can be concluded that public relations is more oriented towards the public, both internally and externally. The public is the main target of public



relations in an organization. Therefore, to create a favorable public opinion of the organization, public relations must be able to carry out its functions with excellence. In short, the process of public relations is to build good connections and communicate harmoniously with the public through two-way communication so that if a problem occurs, it can be solved.

Politicians, especially those in government and parliamentary seats, must be aware that influencers cannot replace the function of the Public Relations Officer. Influencers are sometimes inaccurate in carrying out their performance, just an approach to the number of followers but not accompanied by internalization of issues so that the backfire turns to the Public Relations practitioners themselves.

Another problematic practice is when it is carried out sporadically, partially, and disproportionately. For example, the option of leaving media relations entirely and then being fully active in the virtual sphere is not only a rash strategy. Still, it can also create a condition of images and images inflated on the outside but have no substance. This pseudo-reality is what we often find today. It's just a good display, but it doesn't take root and spread in practice so that the final target of public relations activities in uniting attitudes with the public is not achieved. Moreover, it is common knowledge that in addition to amplifying fake accounts and bots, the virtual sphere also allows creating a trending topic with technical and social engineering.

CONCLUSION

There is nothing wrong with this. However, it is possible that the information was not conveyed

thoroughly. This is reflected in influencers who share information based on directions from service tenants. So that when the Government uses influencer services for the law, the only substance that reaches the public is from the Government's side and forgets public criticism. Also, the use of public figure services as buzzers can eliminate the critical thinking power of the community because public figures become opinion leaders for their followers, so the public figure's thinking will be accepted without any reason to be critical. Therefore, a community leader has the responsibility to provide essential thinking space for his followers. It should also be considered for those hiring public figures to become their buzzers.

Influencers can be an excellent and respectable profession. This can be done if influencers can maintain their dignity as public communicators. Therefore, the following agendas can be considered. First, influencers who work in government agencies need to have qualifications and competencies relevant to their fields. Second, influencers hired by government agencies need to convey openly to the public that the messages transmitted are a form of a commercial, public campaign. Third, government agencies that use influencer services also need to convey the qualifications and competency standards of the influencers they hire. These institutions also need to show that in recruiting influencers, they are transparent, measurable, and accountable by government accountability principles. They must also guarantee that influencers are not meant to limit freedom in democracy and will not silence freedom of opinion in the public sphere.

Thus, dialogue and learning in terms of different views can continue and will further mature the democratic process. In



a democratic country, the process of interaction, communication, and the formation of public perceptions and opinions in a democratic manner are critical. Raising ideas and obtaining support by influencers using hatred, such as hate speech, bullying, spreading hoaxes, distorting facts, and character assassination, can lead to a setback in democracy. Of course, we need to erode these things collectively. Only with this step can we still hope that influencers will develop into public communication actors who are respectable and acceptable to the public.

But we also should remember, In the pattern of Good Governance as a political system, there is a power triangle pattern: government, private sector, and civil society. These three actors have a vital role in driving the policy process. Then the presence of this influencer has a positive meaning for activists or democracy activists in civil society groups.

At this time, when modern democracy or contemporary politics is considered too dominated by market interests, influencers can become a new power source for society in representing people's political attitudes. With the power to build opinions and influence the attitudes of their large followers, influencers as part of civil society will play a role in realizing the ideal political order together with the government and private sector. In carrying out their role as civil society, influencers can be a liaison for communication between the government and the community to re-discuss government programs and agendas so that they are more readily accepted and understood. Influencers can also be a balance or alignment of power with the opposition in strengthening the role of checks and balances.

The ideas and opinions shared by these influencers can create a new societal paradigm about something. However, the role of influencers is considered dangerous if it is used to build public perceptions and views of specific political candidates. They are even creating and spreading hoaxes and hate speech against political opponents, which will create social divisions.

For this reason, influencers in Indonesia today need to cultivate a sense of empathy for any content they create. By creating something that contributes to the country's interests, not solely for popularity and personal interests. So influencers deserve to be considered as one of the new essential actors with integrity in the political system order in the current digital era. In addition, the Indonesian people also need to master digital literacy insight, which is an insight that can guide users of information or electronic technology to get the benefits of the media and reduce the harmful risks of digital media.

CREDIT AUTHORSHIP CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Dani Fadillah: Writing-
Conceptual Draft, Methodology, Data
curation.

Arif Ardy Wibowo: Writing,
Data curation, Draft Compilation,
Methodology.

DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTEREST

We certify that there is no conflict of interest with any financial, personal, or other relationships with other people or organizations related to the material discussed in the manuscript.

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