**SUWANA — Digital Media**

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**Digital Media Literacy in Indonesian Youth to Support Democracy**

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As the world’s third-largest democracy, Indonesia has experienced fundamental changes since the country progressed from a repressive authoritarian to a democratic regime in 1998. Competitive, direct elections have been held four times; freedom of speech and assembly are legally protected; and citizens have a lively and outspoken public sphere. Freedom House, the U.S.-based non-governmental organization, labels Indonesia as a free and democratic country (Antlov and Wetterbeg, 2011, 3). Indonesia’s Ministry of Communication and Informatics reports that there were 82 million Internet users in 2014, and Indonesia has the eighth-highest number of Internet users in the world (Kominfo, 2014). The Internet is perceived as a media that can potentially promote greater democracy due to it being a freer and more open form of communication compared to traditional media, therefore opening more opportunities for freedom of speech and other communicative functions than traditional media communication.

Bennett (2008, 9) argues that the future of democracy is in young people’s hands. It is crucial for young people to learn how to use digital media in order to develop civic and political actions. Democracy and participation in public culture require not just a willingness to consume information but a willingness to create, share, and use information. Internet use has increased rapidly in Indonesia, particularly among Indonesian youth (Kominfo, 2014). This provides an opportunity to use Internet and social media to enhance democracy in Indonesia. Nugroho, Putri, and Laksmi (2012, 7) found that the Internet has encouraged space for citizens to communicate without restriction. Also, Indonesian citizens can create their own public sphere and engage freely with others by blogs, social media, and micro-blogging. Digital media literacy is an important life skill that is increasingly necessary to develop democracy in Indonesia; therefore, this research aims to investigate whether young Indonesian people have been able to understand and meaningfully use digital media to support democratic institutions and practices.

There will be two stages in this research. In the first phase, the focus group method will be suitable for researching Indonesian youth’s digital media literacy and capacity to use digital media to support democracy. I will conduct two focus group discussions to identify and compare their digital media practices. The first focus group will be conducted with young Indonesian urban men and women, middle class, ages 18 to 25 (as university/college students), and Internet heavy users (defined as using the Internet a minimum of once a day (ACMA, 2009a, 6). The second focus group will be conducted with a group of the same background as Group 1 but with a different Internet habit, namely Internet medium users, defined as using the Internet one to seven times a week (ACMA 2009a, 6). Both focus groups will be recruited from faculties of politics/communication in the top 10 university/colleges in Jakarta, and respondents will be drawn from leadership positions in campus organisations (student union/guild). Focus group discussion topics will include how the student makes responsible choices and accesses online information, and also how the student analyses and creates information in a variety of digital media forms. The second phase, semi-structured interviews, will be conducted relating to the digital media practices of young Indonesian urban men and women, middle class, ages 18 to 30, active members in non-profit organizations or the community as a leader or participating on a committee, Internet heavy user and living in Indonesia’s capital, Jakarta. The findings will measure the role of digital media literacy to enhance democracy in Indonesia.

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