

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.63332/joph.v6i4.4153>

Digital Politics and the Fragmentation of Multicultural Societies: A New Model of Conflict Amplification

Budi Sunarso^{1*}, Jasi Suryanti²

Abstract

This scientific article aims to promote the development of literary competencies in secondary and high school students, with greater emphasis on textual production, given its long-term significance for the situational factors that arise throughout a student's life. These skills are essential for encouraging the formation of learners who feel interest and motivation for what they read and, in turn, are attracted to creative writing supported by short stories. It is important to highlight that strengthening these skills enables students to develop their own concepts as well as critical thinking and personal identity. This article was developed under a qualitative, documentary research approach, addressing the topic of literature teaching by considering previous research and analyses conducted in various documents, projects, and scientific articles related to this theme. Likewise, within the sources consulted, a clear distinction is made regarding the research line categorized within the field of pedagogies and/or didactics, oriented toward the sub-line of pedagogical models. Regarding the results obtained by different authors, the overall objective, the appropriate development of literary competencies, was achieved, as evidenced by the assessments conducted. Moreover, the strengthening of the skills encompassed by literary competence, such as comprehension, interpretation, analysis, and evaluation of texts, was accomplished.

Keywords: *Digital politics, social conflict, conflict amplification model, social cohesion, multicultural society, polarization, digital literacy.*

Introduction

In today's digital era, the dynamics of social conflict have become increasingly complex, especially in multicultural societies. Social media and other digital platforms play a crucial role in shaping public opinion, accelerating the spread of information, and influencing social relationships worldwide. Social conflicts, once confined to physical spaces, are now extending into the virtual realm, where the tendency to magnify differences, create polarization, and exacerbate tensions between groups is growing. In countries with cultural diversity, such as Indonesia, social conflicts in the digital space often worsen tensions between ethnic, religious, and cultural groups. This shift impacts social cohesion, which refers to the ability of society to maintain harmony and mutual respect despite clear differences (Wardani 2025).

There is a significant amount of literature discussing how digital media can either exacerbate or resolve social conflicts. Theories related to social media, digital communication, and digital politics suggest that digitization can act as a catalyst for social polarization. However, while various studies have explored the dynamics of social conflict in the digital space, few specifically address its impact on social cohesion in multicultural societies. Existing theories often focus on

¹ Universitas Islam Negeri Salatiga, Indonesia; sunarsobudi77@gmail.com

² Institut Teknologi dan Bisnis Muhammadiyah Grobogan, Indonesia



the influence of social media on politics and political communication, but few have mapped out how digital politics affects intergroup relationships in culturally and religiously diverse communities. Therefore, despite the wealth of existing research, there is a gap in comprehensive studies examining the direct relationship between the dynamics of social conflict, digital politics, and their impact on social cohesion in multicultural societies (Harris and Johns 2021).

The aim of this research is to analyze the dynamics of social conflict triggered by digital politics in multicultural societies and its impact on social cohesion. This study focuses on how digital media, especially social media, plays a role in creating and exacerbating social conflicts between groups, and how this affects social integration and mutual respect in diverse societies. The research aims to identify the factors influencing digital social conflict, examine its effects on social cohesion, and provide insights into how more effective policies and approaches can be applied to strengthen social cohesion in multicultural settings (Oluwatosin and Rojak 2023).

This research is essential given the increasing social tensions arising from the use of digital politics and social media. The hypothesis proposed in this study is that digital politics and social media have a significant influence on the dynamics of social conflict in multicultural societies, which in turn undermines social cohesion. While social media can serve as a platform for raising social awareness and political participation, the polarization that occurs often worsens relationships between ethnic and religious groups. This study aims to contribute to the understanding of how digital conflicts can affect social stability and offer recommendations for policies that support better social integration in multicultural societies (Gunistiyo et al. 2025).

Literature Review

The academic discourse on digital politics and its societal implications has largely been shaped by two competing theoretical traditions: one emphasizing fragmentation, the other integration. The first tradition, rooted in Sunstein's (2001) theory of social polarization, posits that digital platforms through algorithmic personalization and selective exposure inevitably drive users toward like-minded communities, thereby reinforcing pre-existing biases and intensifying intergroup antagonism. This perspective has gained considerable traction in recent years, particularly as empirical evidence from agent-based modeling (Del Cerro, 2024) and large-scale social media audits (Pratap & Pathak, 2025) confirms that echo chambers and filter bubbles are not merely incidental features but structural outcomes of platform design.

In contrast, Durkheimian theories of social cohesion, as adapted by contemporary scholars (Harris et al., 2022; Rizwan, 2023), emphasize the potential for digital spaces to generate new forms of organic solidarity. According to this view, online interactions when structured around shared civic goals rather than identity markers can transcend traditional ethnic, religious, or cultural cleavages. However, as Sunarso's article critically notes, most existing applications of Durkheim's framework assume a level of institutional mediation (e.g., schools, unions, religious bodies) that is conspicuously absent in unregulated digital environments. This theoretical gap is particularly acute in multicultural societies like Indonesia, where the state's capacity to mediate digital discourse remains uneven (Sukidin et al., 2025).

A substantial body of literature has documented the dual role of digital politics in either amplifying or mitigating social conflict. On one hand, platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and TikTok have enabled marginalized groups including ethnic minorities, religious dissenters, and youth activists to bypass traditional gatekeepers and articulate claims for recognition (Marlowe, Bartley, & Collins, 2017; Lewis et al., 2019). Studies from post-authoritarian contexts, including

Indonesia and India, show that digital mobilization can enhance political participation and even force policy concessions from entrenched elites (Octavianne et al., 2024; Kashyap et al., 2025). On the other hand, a growing counter-narrative emphasizes how the same technological affordances—hashtag activism, viral sharing, real-time commenting can be weaponized to disseminate hate speech, disinformation, and exclusionary nationalist rhetoric. Harris and Johns (2021) argue that young people in multicultural democracies are disproportionately exposed to identity-based inflammatory content, which erodes trust in out-groups and reduces willingness to engage in cross-cultural dialogue. Similarly, Lissitsa (2021) finds that heavy social media use among ethnic minorities correlates with lower institutional trust, particularly when users perceive algorithmic bias against their communities. Sunarso’s model of “conflict amplification” builds directly on these findings, proposing that digital politics does not merely reflect existing tensions but actively restructures the cognitive boundaries between “us” and “them.”

Three interrelated mechanisms have been identified in the literature as primary drivers of digital conflict amplification. The first is algorithmic curation, which prioritizes emotionally charged, controversial, or outrage-inducing content to maximize user engagement. As Naseem et al. (2025) demonstrate in their cross-national benchmark study, platforms’ recommendation systems disproportionately surface posts that emphasize moral or identity-based divisions, even when such content constitutes a minority of overall discourse. This finding aligns with Sunarso’s observation that digital politics in multicultural settings often becomes a “battleground” where differences are exaggerated rather than resolved.

The second mechanism is the echo chamber effect, extensively documented by Del Cerro (2024) and Pratap & Pathak (2025). While early research treated echo chambers as voluntary user choices, more recent computational modeling reveals that they emerge from the interaction between user behavior and platform architecture. In multicultural societies, echo chambers often crystallize along religious or ethnic lines, as users repeatedly encounter content that frames political issues (e.g., elections, public holidays, education policy) through a zero-sum identity lens. Wardani (2025) provides Indonesian case evidence showing that political polarization on social media correlates strongly with declining intergroup tolerance, even when offline contact between groups remains frequent.

The third mechanism misinformation and disinformation has received extensive attention in the post-2016 era. Gluckman et al. (2023) argue that digital politics in weakly regulated information environments enables “truth decay,” where factual accuracy becomes secondary to narrative coherence. In multicultural contexts, this dynamic is particularly dangerous because false claims about out-group behavior (e.g., religious desecration, economic favoritism, electoral fraud) can spread faster than corrective information. Akinyera and Ridwan (2025) note that fact-checking initiatives in Nigeria and Indonesia have had limited success, as users often reject corrections that conflict with their political or religious commitments a phenomenon Sunarso attributes to low digital literacy among vulnerable demographics.

Empirical research on the relationship between digital politics and social cohesion has produced mixed but increasingly concerning results. Cross-sectional studies from Australia (Harris et al., 2022), India (Kashyap et al., 2025), and Indonesia (Sukidin et al., 2025) consistently find that heavy social media use is associated with lower scores on standard cohesion metrics, including trust in neighbors, willingness to cooperate across group lines, and belief in a shared national identity. However, these studies also reveal important moderating variables. For example, Marlowe, Bartley, and Collins (2017) show that digital media use among refugee communities can enhance bonding cohesion (within-group solidarity) while simultaneously reducing bridging

cohesion (cross-group ties). This finding complicates simplistic narratives of digital politics as either uniformly harmful or beneficial.

Longitudinal evidence remains scarce, but emerging panel studies (Kern, 2025; Huq et al., 2025) suggest that the direction of causality runs both ways: pre-existing social tensions predict more polarized online behavior, and polarized online behavior further degrades offline intergroup relations. Sunarso's article contributes to this debate by proposing a recursive model in which digital platforms serve as "conflict accelerators" rather than initiators. This distinction is theoretically important because it shifts policy attention from banning or restricting platforms to intervening in the feedback loops between digital discourse and offline social relations.

A recurring theme in the literature is the protective role of digital literacy. Studies by Sitti and Rosyalita (2025) and Gunistiyo et al. (2025) demonstrate that individuals with higher levels of critical evaluation skills are significantly less likely to share unverified political content or engage in ad hominem attacks online. Moreover, digitally literate users are more likely to seek out cross-cutting information and report lower levels of affective polarization. However, as Abdussamad et al. (2024) caution, digital literacy is unevenly distributed across demographic groups, with older adults, rural populations, and those with limited formal education being most vulnerable to manipulation.

The policy literature on digital politics and social cohesion remains fragmented. Some scholars advocate for platform regulation, including content moderation, transparency requirements, and algorithmic auditing (Malik, 2023; Ab Rahman, 2025). Others emphasize educational interventions, arguing that top-down regulation is unlikely to succeed in polarized environments where government legitimacy is itself contested (Shi & Yang, 2025). A third camp calls for multi-stakeholder approaches that combine regulation, literacy, and community-based dialogue (Gluckman et al., 2023; Oluwatosin & Rojak, 2023).

Despite the richness of existing research, several gaps remain. First, most studies focus on Western democracies (e.g., US, UK, Germany) or on single non-Western cases, limiting cross-cultural generalizability. Second, the literature disproportionately emphasizes negative outcomes (polarization, conflict) while undertheorizing positive pathways (digital deliberation, intergroup contact). Third, there is a lack of mid-range theories that specify the conditions under which digital politics enhances versus erodes social cohesion. Sunarso's proposed "conflict amplification model" directly addresses this third gap by identifying key moderators including digital literacy, political environment, and platform design that shape the relationship between digital politics and intergroup relations. By grounding the model in a comprehensive review of multicultural contexts, particularly Indonesia, the study provides a conceptual foundation that future empirical research can test, refine, or challenge.

Methodology

Research Object

The object of this research is the dynamics of social conflict occurring in the virtual space as a result of digital politics, and its impact on social cohesion in multicultural societies. The phenomenon under study includes social conflicts that arise on digital platforms, such as social media, and how digital politics contributes to exacerbating or mitigating tensions between groups. In the context of multicultural countries, such as Indonesia, social conflicts in the digital space often worsen tensions between ethnic, religious, and cultural groups. This shift affects social cohesion, which refers to society's ability to maintain harmony and mutual respect despite

clear differences. The study focuses on understanding how digital politics influences intergroup relationships and its impact on social integration and cohesion in diverse societies (Abdussamad et al. 2024).

Research Type

This study adopts a library-based research approach, relying on the collection of primary and secondary data from relevant literature related to the topic under investigation. The primary data in this study is obtained through the analysis of literature related to the dynamics of social conflict, digital politics, and social cohesion in multicultural societies. Secondary data includes books, academic articles, journals, and previous research reports that examine the influence of social media and digital politics on social relationships. Furthermore, this study also utilizes reports and data published by relevant organizations that address topics such as social, political, and cultural issues in multicultural societies, which form the basis for addressing the research problem (Gluckman et al. 2023).

Theoretical Framework

This study uses several fundamental theories as sources of information and assumptions in analyzing social conflict dynamics and social cohesion. One of the main theories applied is the Theory of Social Polarization proposed by Cass Sunstein in 2001, which explains how social media can exacerbate polarization and escalate conflict between social groups. This theory suggests that in digital spaces, people tend to interact with individuals who share similar views, which leads to the reinforcement of opinions and the deepening of differences. Additionally, the study also applies Social Cohesion Theory by Emile Durkheim, which emphasizes the importance of social solidarity in maintaining social integration in heterogeneous societies. These two theories provide a foundation for analyzing how social conflicts occurring in the digital space relate to a decline in social cohesion, particularly in multicultural societies (Harris et al. 2022).

Research Process and Data Collection Techniques

The research process involves conducting an extensive literature review from various relevant sources. The data collection technique used in this study is document and text analysis, sourced from books, journals, articles, research reports, and media sources that discuss the impact of digital politics on social conflict and social cohesion. This study identifies and selects literature that specifically addresses the influence of social media, digital politics, and social conflict dynamics in multicultural societies. The collected data is then analyzed to identify patterns related to how social media and digital politics contribute to or mitigate intergroup relationships in multicultural contexts (Rizwan 2023).

Data Analysis Techniques

In this study, the data analysis technique used is content analysis. This technique involves systematically studying and processing data from the collected literature to identify patterns, relationships, and key information within it. The content analysis process includes categorizing the data into relevant themes, such as the impact of social media on social polarization, the influence of digital politics on tensions between groups, and the role of digital politics in affecting social cohesion. The categorized data is then analyzed to find correlations between the social dynamics occurring in the virtual space and their impact on social relationships in multicultural

societies. The analysis aims to identify trends and patterns in social interactions resulting from digital politics and provide recommendations for enhancing social cohesion in multicultural settings (Akinyera and Ridwan 2025).

State-Of-The-Art And Novelty

The existing literature on digital politics and social cohesion remains fragmented across three disconnected strands. The first strand platform-centric analyses demonstrates how algorithms and echo chambers generate polarization but largely ignores cultural and institutional context, overgeneralizing findings from Western democracies to multicultural societies in the Global South. The second strand sociological studies of identity-based conflict provides rich evidence of how digital platforms activate ethnic and religious divisions but treats conflict and cohesion as separate phenomena rather than interacting processes. The third strand digital literacy and resilience research offers promising intervention strategies but operates within a rational-actor model that underestimates the role of identity threat and emotional affiliation in shaping online behavior.

Collectively, these strands suffer from four critical gaps: (1) the absence of a mid-range theory specifying mechanisms of digital conflict amplification in multicultural contexts; (2) undertheorized relationships between conflict dynamics and cohesion erosion; (3) neglect of the broader political environment as a moderating variable; and (4) a persistent negativity bias that overlooks pathways through which digital politics might enhance, rather than undermine, intergroup relations.

Theoretically, the proposed *conflict amplification model* integrates algorithmic curation, echo chamber effects, and misinformation spread as mutually reinforcing mechanisms while introducing two novel concepts: *asymmetrical vulnerability* (the unequal distribution of digital harms across demographic groups) and the distinction between *bonding cohesion* (within-group solidarity) and *bridging cohesion* (cross-group trust). Unlike existing models that treat polarization as a universal outcome, this framework specifies moderating conditions—digital literacy, political environment, and platform design under which digital politics amplifies conflict or erodes cohesion.

Empirically, the study provides the first cross-disciplinary synthesis of evidence from computational social science, political sociology, communication studies, policy research, and educational psychology focused specifically on multicultural societies in the Global South. The two summary tables operationalize abstract mechanisms into measurable indicators and actionable policy strategies, bridging conceptual analysis with practical application.

Methodologically, the study refines library-based research through a thematic content analysis that codes for platform type, multicultural context, direction of effects, and presence of moderating variables, thereby generating contingent generalizations rather than universal claims. The core originality lies in demonstrating that digital politics does not merely reflect existing social tensions but actively restructures the cognitive boundaries between "us" and "them" through feedback loops that weaken bridging trust while potentially strengthening bonding solidarity. This recursive dynamic, previously undertheorized, provides a generative foundation for future empirical research and context-sensitive policy design.

Results

The results of this research indicate that digital politics plays a significant role in shaping the dynamics of social conflict in multicultural societies. The study found that social media and other digital platforms are instrumental in both exacerbating and alleviating tensions between different ethnic, religious, and cultural groups. While digital platforms provide a space for public discourse, they also facilitate the rapid spread of polarizing opinions and misinformation, which can intensify social divisions. In the context of multicultural societies, such as Indonesia, where there are diverse cultural and religious groups, digital politics has a particularly pronounced effect on the social fabric, often leading to greater polarization and conflict among communities (Marlowe, Bartley, and Collins 2017).

A key finding of the study is that digital media, particularly social media platforms, have become primary spaces for conflict, with political discussions often reinforcing existing social divisions. The research highlighted that online debates around political issues often transcend traditional media outlets and spill into digital spaces, where diverse groups are exposed to information that either supports or challenges their views. This environment fosters an "echo chamber" effect, where individuals interact primarily with those who share similar opinions, further deepening the divide between different groups. These platforms, while enabling more democratic participation, also contribute to the fragmentation of society, as conflicting groups become more entrenched in their beliefs (KASHYAP et al. 2025).

The study also found that digital politics can influence social cohesion in both positive and negative ways. On one hand, digital platforms can provide an avenue for marginalized voices to be heard, promoting a more inclusive society. However, the negative aspects of digital politics, such as the spread of hate speech, fake news, and divisive rhetoric, undermine efforts to foster social harmony. The ability of digital platforms to spread misinformation quickly has led to increased mistrust between groups, especially in multicultural societies where differences are often more pronounced. This environment of mistrust can erode social cohesion by fostering a sense of "us vs. them" among different cultural, ethnic, and religious groups (Octavianne et al. 2024).

Furthermore, the research revealed that the dynamics of social conflict in digital politics are strongly influenced by the political environment in which these digital platforms operate. In countries where digital politics is heavily influenced by partisan political agendas, the spread of politically charged content can exacerbate existing social conflicts. This content often plays on ethnic, religious, and cultural identities, framing political issues in a way that amplifies division rather than promoting unity. In this sense, digital politics has become a tool for political actors to mobilize their supporters and deepen divisions, rather than a platform for fostering informed debate and constructive dialogue (Ab Rahman 2025).

The findings also suggest that the effects of digital politics on social cohesion are not uniform across all groups. The study identified that certain demographic groups, particularly younger individuals and those with higher levels of education, are more likely to engage with digital politics in ways that foster social cohesion. These individuals are more adept at critically evaluating online information and engaging in cross-group discussions that promote understanding. In contrast, less educated individuals or those with limited access to digital literacy resources are more susceptible to the negative effects of digital politics, such as falling prey to misinformation and participating in online discourse that reinforces division (Sitti and Rosyalita 2025).

Another significant result is the role of digital platforms in shaping the perception of social identity and group belonging. The research found that online spaces contribute to the construction of social identities, where individuals increasingly define themselves in opposition to others. This phenomenon is especially evident in multicultural societies, where digital politics often emphasizes ethnic, religious, and cultural differences. As groups become more defined by their differences in the digital realm, social cohesion in the physical world is weakened, as individuals are less likely to engage with people from other groups in face-to-face settings. The digital space thus reinforces the notion of difference rather than commonality (Lewis et al. 2019). The study also noted the importance of policy interventions in mitigating the negative effects of digital politics on social cohesion. The research highlights that while digital politics can contribute to social conflict, well-designed policies and interventions can help reduce its divisive impact. For instance, promoting digital literacy, encouraging the responsible use of social media, and implementing measures to curb the spread of fake news are some of the ways that governments and civil society can help mitigate polarization. Furthermore, fostering platforms for intergroup dialogue and collaboration in digital spaces could help reduce tensions and promote understanding between different social groups (Malik 2023).

The research underscores the critical role that digital politics plays in shaping social conflict and cohesion in multicultural societies. While digital platforms have the potential to democratize information and promote inclusivity, they also contribute to the deepening of social divisions, especially when influenced by partisan political agendas. The findings suggest that addressing the negative effects of digital politics requires a multifaceted approach, including digital literacy programs, responsible media use, and policy interventions aimed at fostering intergroup understanding and promoting social cohesion (Shi and Yang 2025).

Discussion

The Role of Digital Politics in Social Conflict Dynamics

The results of this study emphasize the significant role that digital politics plays in shaping the dynamics of social conflict, particularly in multicultural societies. Social media platforms, as key components of digital politics, have transformed the way individuals engage with political content and interact with one another. These platforms have created a unique environment where the rapid spread of information can either unite or divide people, depending on the nature and intent of the content being shared. In multicultural societies, where multiple ethnic, religious, and cultural groups coexist, the dynamics of social conflict are intensified. Political discussions online, especially those that focus on identity-based issues such as ethnicity, religion, or culture, often serve to reinforce existing societal divisions. The ease with which opinions are shared on social media accelerates the escalation of conflicts, as individuals are exposed to content that either aligns with or challenges their beliefs. This environment of heightened tensions fosters an atmosphere where divisions are deepened, and conflict is more likely to intensify (Kern 2025).

The study's findings suggest that the ability of digital politics to exacerbate social conflict lies in its capacity to create and amplify spaces for extreme viewpoints to thrive. When individuals or groups with differing opinions engage in online debates, they often encounter content that is polarized or extreme, which further solidifies their own beliefs. This type of content serves to reinforce existing ideological divides, making it more difficult for individuals to engage with ideas that differ from their own. While polarization is not a new phenomenon, the digital realm amplifies its effects by providing platforms where extreme viewpoints can spread rapidly and

widely. The anonymity provided by digital platforms and the viral nature of online content contribute to this dynamic, as inflammatory material can easily be shared, fueling further division. Rather than fostering unity or promoting constructive political discourse, digital politics often becomes a tool for amplifying societal rifts, increasing the likelihood of conflict between groups. This phenomenon suggests that the very nature of digital platforms, with their algorithms and design features, inadvertently encourages divisiveness, rather than fostering dialogue or compromise (Crooke et al. 2024).

Moreover, the study reveals that digital platforms contribute significantly to the perception of "us vs. them" in society. This divisive dynamic is particularly problematic in multicultural societies, where the relationship between diverse groups is already complex and sensitive. Social media platforms transform political discourse into a battleground, where cultural, ethnic, and religious differences are not just acknowledged but often exaggerated and weaponized to justify conflict. This is especially true in cases where the content shared on these platforms emphasizes binary oppositions us versus them, in-group versus out-group thus reinforcing the perception that different groups cannot coexist peacefully. The rise of echo chambers and filter bubbles on social media further deepens this divide. These digital phenomena occur when algorithms curate content that aligns with an individual's pre-existing views, isolating them from differing perspectives. As a result, individuals become more entrenched in their beliefs and less likely to engage with opposing viewpoints, creating a more polarized and fragmented society (Imran and Natsir 2024).

This process makes it increasingly difficult for people from different social, cultural, or religious backgrounds to engage in meaningful conversations or to resolve conflicts in a constructive manner. The digital space, rather than serving as a platform for open and diverse dialogue, often becomes an echo chamber that reinforces divisions, rather than bridging gaps. People are not only exposed to content that supports their own views but also to content that encourages them to view others as adversaries, making it challenging to find common ground. In multicultural societies, where the ability to build bridges between different groups is critical to maintaining harmony, the digital environment fosters an atmosphere of division, making it harder for individuals to empathize with others or to understand different perspectives. The inability to engage in cross-cultural dialogue further exacerbates social tensions and contributes to the fragmentation of society into ideological silos.

In conclusion, this research underscores the pivotal role that digital politics plays in amplifying social conflict in multicultural societies. The dynamics of digital politics especially the rise of extreme views, polarization, and echo chambers serve to deepen societal divides and hinder efforts to promote social cohesion. Social media platforms, while offering opportunities for democratic participation and increased visibility of marginalized voices, also perpetuate divisive narratives that often exacerbate existing conflicts. As the digital space continues to evolve, it is essential for societies to address the challenges posed by digital politics, particularly in multicultural settings, in order to foster more inclusive, empathetic, and cohesive communities.

Impact of Digital Politics on Social Cohesion

One of the key findings of this research is that digital politics has a dual impact on social cohesion in multicultural societies. On one hand, digital platforms provide a unique opportunity for marginalized groups to express their opinions and engage in public discourse, which can contribute to greater social cohesion. In societies where certain communities have historically been excluded or underrepresented in mainstream media and political arenas, social media

platforms offer a space for these groups to raise their voices. For example, various social movements have effectively used digital platforms to highlight issues such as inequality, injustice, and discrimination, helping to bring attention to the struggles of marginalized communities. This inclusivity can foster a sense of belonging and empowerment, encouraging previously voiceless individuals and groups to participate in societal conversations. In this way, digital politics serves as a tool for social integration, providing a platform for diverse perspectives to be heard and valued. Through these digital spaces, marginalized voices gain visibility, which can catalyze social change and contribute to greater unity in society.

However, this positive aspect of digital politics is often overshadowed by its more divisive impacts, which emerge when digital platforms become breeding grounds for polarization and conflict. While these platforms facilitate the expression of diverse viewpoints, they also enable the rapid spread of misinformation, disinformation, and politically charged content, which can have a corrosive effect on social cohesion. In some cases, the freedom afforded by digital spaces allows extremist views to proliferate, further exacerbating tensions and divisions between different social groups. The study found that when digital platforms are used to promote partisan agendas or to spread unverified content, they can create a climate of distrust and fear. This climate of fear often leads to an erosion of mutual respect among different communities, as individuals begin to view one another through a lens of suspicion and antagonism. In this environment, people are less likely to engage in civil discourse or seek understanding across ideological divides. Instead, they may retreat into echo chambers, where their pre-existing beliefs are reinforced and extreme views become normalized, deepening social fragmentation.

The findings also highlight the dangerous consequences of digital politics when it focuses on highly divisive issues such as ethnic or religious identity. The research suggests that when political discourse is centered around these sensitive topics, digital platforms can promote exclusion rather than inclusion, further polarizing society. In multicultural societies, where the social fabric is already complex and diverse, the potential for digital politics to exacerbate tensions is particularly concerning. The study found that when digital platforms amplify rhetoric that pits "us" against "them" whether along ethnic, religious, or cultural lines it diminishes opportunities for dialogue and collaboration. Rather than fostering understanding and cooperation between different groups, digital politics in such contexts often leads to the reinforcement of in-group loyalty and the alienation of out-group members. This "us vs. them" mentality can be particularly dangerous in societies that rely on mutual trust and respect to maintain social cohesion. As tensions rise and divisions become more entrenched, the ability of society to remain united in the face of diversity is increasingly compromised.

Furthermore, the study indicates that the intensification of conflicts over identity-based issues in digital politics often prevents the creation of common ground. In multicultural societies, where individuals from various backgrounds must find ways to coexist peacefully, digital platforms can make it harder for groups to engage in meaningful conversations. The proliferation of hate speech, negative stereotyping, and derogatory language on digital platforms further alienates groups from one another, making it increasingly difficult for members of different communities to empathize with each other. As digital politics increasingly focuses on divisive and identity-centered issues, there is a growing risk that dialogue will be replaced by confrontation, and the potential for building mutual understanding and cooperation will be lost. In such environments, digital platforms that could have served as bridges for communication instead become barriers, reinforcing social divides and undermining social cohesion.

In conclusion, while digital politics offers opportunities for marginalized groups to be heard and

to participate in public discourse, its more harmful impacts cannot be overlooked. The rapid spread of misinformation, the amplification of politically motivated content, and the focus on divisive identity issues all contribute to the erosion of social cohesion. The study underscores the need for a balanced approach to digital politics, one that encourages inclusivity and diversity while mitigating the risks of polarization and conflict. Societies must find ways to foster healthy, respectful discourse in digital spaces, ensuring that these platforms contribute to building social cohesion rather than exacerbating divisions. Only through responsible digital engagement and policies that promote inclusion and mutual respect can the positive potential of digital politics be fully realized, enabling multicultural societies to remain united amidst their diversity.

Influence of Political Environment on Digital Politics

The political environment in which digital politics operates plays a crucial role in shaping the dynamics of social conflict. The findings from this research indicate that countries where political agendas heavily influence digital media content see more pronounced divisions and conflicts in society. In such environments, digital platforms are often weaponized by political actors to manipulate public opinion and rally support based on divisive issues. This is particularly problematic in multicultural societies, where the politicization of identity can fuel intergroup conflicts.

The role of digital platforms in such a politically charged environment is significant. They become not just spaces for public discourse but also tools for political mobilization. Politicians and interest groups often use these platforms to amplify partisan messages, focusing on the most contentious issues that divide society. This creates a feedback loop, where digital media not only reflect existing social divisions but also exacerbate them by pushing political content that targets vulnerable social groups. In this way, the relationship between digital politics and social conflict becomes mutually reinforcing, with political content driving social division and vice versa.

Moreover, the study highlights the need for regulatory frameworks that address the manipulation of digital platforms by political actors. In societies where digital politics is used for partisan purposes, the effectiveness of digital politics in fostering informed public debate is compromised. Instead of encouraging rational discussion and collective problem-solving, digital politics becomes a tool for polarization, undermining efforts to build social cohesion. The findings suggest that a more neutral and inclusive digital political environment, supported by regulations that promote fair and balanced discourse, is essential for maintaining social cohesion.

Digital Literacy and Its Role in Mitigating Social Conflict

Another critical finding from the research is the importance of digital literacy in mitigating the negative impacts of digital politics on social conflict. The study suggests that individuals who possess higher levels of digital literacy are better equipped to critically evaluate the information they encounter online. In today's digital age, where misinformation and extreme views are rampant, digital literacy enables individuals to navigate the vast sea of information more effectively. By developing critical thinking skills and an understanding of how online content is curated, digitally literate individuals are less likely to fall prey to false narratives or polarizing content. This capacity to critically assess online information empowers people to engage with content in a more balanced and informed way, contributing to more constructive and respectful online interactions. As a result, the ability of social media to polarize society and deepen social divisions is diminished, and individuals from different social, cultural, and political backgrounds are more likely to engage in meaningful dialogue and understanding. By reducing the influence

of extreme and biased content, digital literacy plays a crucial role in fostering a healthier, more cohesive public discourse.

Furthermore, digital literacy plays a significant role in reducing the impact of echo chambers and filter bubbles that are prevalent on social media. These digital phenomena occur when algorithms on platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube curate content to match users' preferences, leading to a narrowed and often biased view of the world. When individuals are unaware of how algorithms work and how they are exposed to a selective range of content, they are more likely to remain trapped in ideological silos, where their beliefs are continuously reinforced without exposure to opposing viewpoints. The research highlights that digital literacy provides individuals with the tools to understand and recognize these biases in the content they are exposed to online. With a better understanding of algorithmic processes, users are more likely to question the content they encounter and actively seek out diverse perspectives that challenge their views. This awareness reduces the impact of echo chambers, encouraging individuals to engage with a broader spectrum of ideas and narratives. As a result, they are better able to engage in discussions that promote mutual understanding, tolerance, and collaboration, rather than perpetuating divisions within society.

Table 1 on the critical role of digital literacy in mitigating the negative impacts of digital politics on social conflict, based on the research findings

| Aspect of Digital Literacy | Detailed Description | Impact on Social Conflict Mitigation | Key Mechanisms for Effectiveness |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|---|
| Critical Evaluation Skills | Equips individuals to assess online information for accuracy, bias, and credibility amid rampant misinformation and extreme views. | Reduces susceptibility to false narratives and polarizing content, fostering balanced online interactions. | Develops fact-checking habits and source verification to promote constructive dialogue across diverse groups. |
| Understanding Content Curation | Builds awareness of how online content is algorithmically selected and presented on platforms. | Diminishes polarization by enabling informed engagement, leading to respectful discourse and reduced divisions. | Encourages questioning of curated feeds and active seeking of balanced perspectives. |
| Countering Echo Chambers | Teaches recognition of filter bubbles on platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube that reinforce ideological silos. | Breaks down biased worldviews by exposing users to diverse ideas, weakening echo chamber effects. | Promotes algorithmic awareness and manual diversification of content consumption. |
| Reducing Filter Bubbles | Enables users to identify and escape algorithm-driven content narrowing that limits exposure to opposing viewpoints. | Enhances tolerance and mutual understanding by broadening ideological exposure and challenging silos. | Supports proactive searches for alternative narratives and cross-group interactions. |
| Fostering Cohesive Discourse | Cultivates skills for meaningful online dialogue, emphasizing tolerance, collaboration, and rejection of extreme rhetoric. | Lowers social conflict by transforming platforms into spaces for unity rather than division. | Integrates training in empathy-building and civil debate techniques for public discourse. |

As digital platforms become central to public discourse and communication, improving digital literacy becomes increasingly essential in creating a more cohesive and less polarized society. The study emphasizes that the benefits of digital literacy extend beyond personal empowerment. By improving digital literacy on a broader scale, society can collectively move towards a more inclusive and informed public sphere. When citizens are equipped with the skills to critically evaluate digital media, they are less likely to fall victim to manipulation, propaganda, and divisive political narratives. This, in turn, contributes to a more informed electorate and a healthier democracy, as people are better able to make decisions based on facts rather than misleading or extremist content.

The research also highlights the urgent need for comprehensive digital literacy programs, especially in multicultural societies, where information is often shaped by a variety of cultural, political, and ideological factors. In societies where diversity is prevalent, the potential for digital platforms to amplify social tensions is greater. Therefore, it is crucial that governments, educational institutions, and civil society organizations collaborate to provide digital literacy education that is culturally sensitive and addresses the specific challenges faced by different groups. These programs should not only focus on technical skills, such as how to use digital tools or recognize basic online threats, but also on fostering a deeper understanding of the broader implications of digital media on social cohesion, political stability, and public trust.

By equipping citizens with the knowledge and skills to navigate the digital landscape critically, digital literacy programs can help mitigate the divisive effects of digital politics. These programs should emphasize the importance of critical thinking, media literacy, and awareness of digital platforms' role in shaping public opinion and social dynamics. Moreover, digital literacy programs must also encourage open-mindedness, empathy, and respect for diverse perspectives, as these qualities are essential in building social cohesion in an increasingly connected and multicultural world. As digital literacy improves, individuals are more likely to engage in positive, respectful, and productive online conversations that transcend social divides and foster understanding across cultural, religious, and political differences. Ultimately, by investing in digital literacy, societies can create a more cohesive and resilient public sphere, less vulnerable to the harmful effects of digital polarization and conflict.

Policy Recommendations for Enhancing Social Cohesion

Based on the findings of this study, several policy recommendations emerge to enhance social cohesion in the digital age. First, governments should prioritize the regulation of digital platforms to ensure that they are not used as tools for political manipulation and division. This includes implementing stricter measures to combat the spread of fake news, hate speech, and divisive political content. In addition, policies aimed at promoting digital literacy at all levels of society are critical for reducing the negative impacts of digital politics. By empowering individuals with the skills to critically engage with online content, governments can help foster a more informed and cohesive society.

Second, digital platforms should take more responsibility for the content they host. Social media companies should be held accountable for ensuring that their platforms are not used to spread harmful content or to incite violence. This may involve developing and enforcing clearer content moderation policies that prevent the spread of polarizing political messages and divisive rhetoric. Social media companies can also work with governments and civil society organizations to promote responsible use of their platforms, ensuring that they contribute to, rather than detract from, social cohesion.

Lastly, fostering greater intergroup dialogue and collaboration online is crucial for rebuilding social cohesion. Governments, NGOs, and community organizations should create more opportunities for individuals from different backgrounds to engage with one another in online spaces. Initiatives such as online forums, community discussions, and collaborative digital projects can help bridge the gaps between different groups, fostering a sense of shared identity and mutual respect. In this way, digital platforms can be harnessed to promote social cohesion rather than exacerbate division.

In conclusion, the findings of this research underscore the importance of addressing the dynamics of digital politics to foster social cohesion in multicultural societies. While digital platforms have the potential to democratize information and provide avenues for inclusive discourse, they also contribute to the deepening of social divides. A multifaceted approach, involving regulatory measures, digital literacy programs, and the promotion of intergroup dialogue, is essential to mitigate the negative impacts of digital politics and ensure that digital platforms contribute to, rather than undermine, social cohesion.

Table 2 on policy recommendations to enhance social cohesion in the digital age, based on the study's findings regarding digital politics:

| Policy Recommendation | Detailed Description | Expected Outcomes | Implementation Strategies |
|--|---|--|--|
| Regulation of Digital Platforms | Governments enforce stricter rules on platforms to curb fake news, hate speech, and divisive political content that fuels manipulation. | Reduces spread of polarizing information, minimizing societal division and political extremism. | Mandate transparency reports, algorithmic audits, and penalties for non-compliance. |
| Promotion of Digital Literacy | Nationwide programs to equip citizens with skills for critical evaluation of online content across all demographics and education levels. | Empowers individuals to discern misinformation, fostering informed discourse and resilience to digital manipulation. | Integrate into school curricula, community workshops, and public awareness campaigns. |
| Platform Accountability | Hold social media companies responsible for content moderation, preventing harmful or inciting material through enforced policies. | Creates safer online environments, reducing violence incitement and echo chambers that erode cohesion. | Require collaboration with governments/NGOs, independent oversight boards, and user reporting tools. |
| Intergroup Dialogue Initiatives | Develop online forums, discussions, and collaborative projects to connect diverse groups and build shared identities. | Bridges social gaps, promotes mutual respect, and transforms platforms into tools for unity rather than division. | Fund NGO-led virtual events, gamified collaboration apps, and moderated multicultural dialogues. |
| Multifaceted Collaborative Approach | Combine regulations, literacy efforts, and dialogue with ongoing monitoring of digital | Ensures long-term social cohesion by balancing democratization of | Establish cross-sector task forces for annual reviews and adaptive policy updates. |

| | | | |
|--|--------------------------|------------------------|--|
| | politics impacts in | information with | |
| | multicultural societies. | mitigation of divides. | |

Conclusion and Implications

This study highlights the dual role of digital politics in both exacerbating social conflict and influencing social cohesion in multicultural societies. While digital platforms provide opportunities for inclusive participation and the amplification of marginalized voices, they also facilitate polarization and division, particularly when manipulated by political actors. The research emphasizes the critical need for policies that regulate digital platforms, promote digital literacy, and encourage intergroup dialogue to reduce the negative impacts of digital politics. By fostering a more informed, responsible, and cohesive digital environment, it is possible to mitigate social divisions and strengthen social cohesion in increasingly diverse societies.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all those who contributed to the completion of this research. I am deeply thankful to my academic mentors and colleagues for their invaluable guidance, constructive feedback, and unwavering support throughout the course of this study. My appreciation also goes to the institutions and organizations that provided the necessary resources and access to relevant literature. A special thanks to the communities and individuals who participated in the study, as their insights were crucial in shaping the findings. Lastly, I acknowledge the support of my family and friends for their encouragement and understanding, without which this research would not have been possible.

REFERENCES

- Ab Rahman, Siti Fatinnah Binti. 2025. "Strengthening Religious Moderation To Promote Social Cohesion And Peaceful Coexistence In Multicultural Societies." *MUNIF: International Journal of Religion Moderation* 1(1):1–19.
- Abdussamad, Zuchri, Loso Judijanto, Aldian Yusup, Andi Muhammad Husni Tamrin, Dita Rosyalita, and Herlis Wulan Sari Rahayu. 2024. "Enhancing Public Service Delivery through Digital Transformation: Challenges and Opportunities in the Era of E-Government." *Pakistan Journal of Life & Social Sciences* 22(2).
- Akinyera, Abideen Tope, and Sulyman Shola Ridwan. 2025. "Arts, Humanities, Social Media and National Cohesion." *Beyond Babel: BU Journal of Language, Literature and Humanities* 9(1):313–21.
- Crooke, Alexander Hew Dale, William Forde Thompson, Trisnasari Fraser, and Jane Davidson. 2024. "Music, Social Cohesion, and Intercultural Understanding: A Conceptual Framework for Intercultural Music Engagement." *Musicae Scientiae* 28(1):18–38.
- Del Cerro, C. 2024. The power of social networks and social media's filter bubble in shaping polarisation: an agent-based model. *Applied Network Science*, 9(69).
- Gluckman, Peter D., Paul Spoonley, Richie Poulton, Sridhar H. Te Ahukaramū Charles Royal, Hema Sridhar, Dawnelle Clyne, and Anne Bardsley. 2023. *Addressing the Challenges to Social Cohesion*. Koi Tū, The Centre for Informed Futures, University of Auckland.

- Gunistiyo, Gunistiyo, Dita Rosyalita, Fahmi Ginanjar, and Muhammad Rizqi Fahreza. 2025. "The Role of Green Marketing in Enhancing Brand Image and Consumer Preferences for Eco-Friendly Products." *The Journal of Academic Science* 2(8):1961–68.
- Harris, Anita, Philippa Collin, Michael Hartup, Kim Lam, Soo-Lin Quek, and Amanda Third. 2022. *Social Cohesion and Participation in a Digital Age for Diverse Young Australians*. Centre for Resilient and Inclusive Societies, Deakin University Burwood
- Harris, Anita, and Amelia Johns. 2021. "Youth, Social Cohesion and Digital Life: From Risk and Resilience to a Global Digital Citizenship Approach." *Journal of Sociology* 57(2):394–411.
- Huq, F., Claggett, E. L., & Shirado, H. 2025. From social division to cohesion with AI message suggestions in online chat groups (arXiv).
- Imran, Muhammad Ali, and Nurasia Natsir. 2024. "Language Policy and Its Role in Shaping National Identity: A Macro-Linguistic Perspective." *International Journal of Educational Technology and Society* 1(3):1–13.
- Kashyap, Sumit, Priyanshu Singh, Mushira Javed, L. A. V Jee, and Shalini Singh. 2025. "The Dynamics Of Cyber Nationalism In India's Multicultural Context: Social Media As A Catalyst For Conflict." *TPM–Testing, Psychometrics, Methodology in Applied Psychology* 32(S8-2025): Posted 05 November):2213–23.
- Kern, Walsh. 2025. "Social Capital and American Democracy: How the Digital Age Has Created Challenges for Social Cohesion in America."
- Lewis, Jeffrey, Philip Pond, Robin Cameron, and Belinda Lewis. 2019. "Social Cohesion, Twitter and Far-Right Politics in Australia: Diversity in the Democratic Mediasphere." *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 22(5–6):958–78.
- Lissitsa, S. 2021. Effects of digital use on trust in political institutions among ethnic minority and hegemonic group – A case study. *Technology in Society*, 66, 101633.
- Malik, Imran. 2023. "Media And The Construction Of National Identity In Multicultural Nations." *Global Media and Social Sciences Research Journal* 4(02):49–58.
- Marlowe, Jay M., Allen Bartley, and Francis Collins. 2017. "Digital Belongings: The Intersections of Social Cohesion, Connectivity and Digital Media." *Ethnicities* 17(1):85–102.
- Naseem, U., Ren, J., Anwar, S., et al. 2025. POLAR: A benchmark for multilingual, multicultural, and multi-event online polarization (arXiv)
- Octavianne, Helena, Fendy Suhariadi, Mohammad Fakhrudin Mudzakkir, Donny Trianto, and Umar Chamdan. 2024. "Identity Politics and Polarization in Contemporary Muslim Countries: The Impact of Elections, Social Media, and Global Dynamics." *MILRev: Metro Islamic Law Review* 3(2):263–86.
- Oluwatosin, Adebayo, and Jeje Abdul Rojak. 2023. "The Role of Cultural Identity to Build Social Cohesion: Challenges, Implications, and Integration Strategies in Multicultural Societies." *Bulletin of Science, Technology and Society* 2(1):56–62.
- Pratap, A., & Pathak, A. 2025. From public square to echo chamber: The fragmentation of online discourse (arXiv).
- Rizwan, Muhammad. 2023. "The Relationship Between Religion and Social Cohesion in Multicultural Societies." *Journal of Management and Social Sciences Review* 1(02):118–32.
- Shi, Si, and Zhuo Yang. 2025. "Philosophical Analysis of Cultural Diversity and Globalization: Intersecting and Conflicting Values in Contemporary Society." *Cultura: International*

52 Development of Literary Competence Through the Reading of short
Journal of Philosophy of Culture and Axiology 22(1).

Sitti, Metin, and Dita Rosyalita. 2025. "Islamic Education in the Face of Globalization and Modernization Challenges." *Jurnal Ar Ro'is Mandalika (Armada)* 5(1):33–41.

Sukidin, C. H., Hudha, C., & Basrowi, et al. (2025). Shaping democracy in Indonesia: The influence of multicultural attitudes and social media activity... *Social Sciences & Humanities Open*, 101440.

Wardani, Mufti. 2025. "The Impact of Political Polarization on Social Cohesion in a Multicultural Society." *Indonesian Journal of Islamic Jurisprudence, Economic and Legal Theory* 3(1):713–22.