



Legal Paradigms in Addressing Social Polarization on Social Media



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ABSTRACT

This research aims to explore the legal paradigm in overcoming social polarization that is increasingly sharp on social media. This polarization is exacerbated by digital platform algorithms that reinforce "echo chambers" and the spread of certain interest-based content, including disinformation and hate speech. This phenomenon triggers ideological segregation and social conflicts that threaten the stability of society and democracy. The study uses a qualitative method with a literature study approach, analyzing journal articles, books, and policy documents from the last five years (2018–2023) that are relevant to law and social media. The data collection technique is carried out through a systematic document review, while data analysis uses a thematic approach to map the main patterns and concepts related to legal regulations and digital platforms. The findings of the study show that an adaptive and inclusivity-based legal paradigm is needed to overcome the challenges of social polarization. Regulations should include algorithmic transparency, content moderation, and human rights protections without sacrificing freedom of speech. In addition, collaboration between the government, social media platforms, and the public is needed to create a healthy digital space. This research makes a significant contribution to the development of legal and technological literature and offers policy recommendations that can be applied practically to reduce the impact of social polarization in the digital era.

1. Introduction

In the increasingly connected digital era, social media has become the main space for social interaction and information exchange. However, the use of social media also raises new challenges, including increasingly sharp social polarization. This polarization is triggered by the algorithms of social media platforms that prioritize content based on individual interests, creating "echo chambers" that isolate certain views and reinforce cognitive biases (Schäfer et al., 2023). As a result, individuals are less and less exposed to different perspectives, which can exacerbate divisions in society (Mahmood et al., 2024).

This phenomenon is also exacerbated by the spread of misinformation and hate speech on social media, which can deepen social and political tensions (Pennycook et al., 2020). Several studies show that social media platforms often fail to implement effective regulations to address this divisive content (Guess et al., 2020). This raises an urgent need to revise legal and policy approaches in dealing with social dynamics in the digital space (Marwick & Lewis, 2017).

Social polarization refers to a sharp separation in society based on differences in certain values, views, or identities. This phenomenon is often exacerbated by the use of social media, which amplifies "filter bubbles" and echo chambers, where individuals tend to be exposed to information that supports their own views and avoid opposing perspectives. A study by Schäfer et al. (2023) shows that inclusivity norms can mitigate the negative impact of polarization of opinion in various European countries, which poses a major challenge to sustainable social integration (Schäfer et al., 2023).

Social media often plays a crucial role in exacerbating polarization by facilitating the spread of hate speech and divisional political rhetoric. Research by Mahmood et al. (2024) highlights how political rhetoric on platforms like YouTube creates deep social fragmentation, especially among different groups of political supporters. In this context, political leaders have a great responsibility not to use polarization as a political tool (Mahmood et al., 2024).

Furthermore, social polarization can have an impact on political stability and peace. For example, Merawi (2024) explains that ethnic polarization in Ethiopia hinders the



development of an inclusive society and a strong shared identity. With philosophy education as a tool to overcome ethnic divisions, Merawi proposed the importance of educating the public about the values of tolerance and diversity. This effort is expected to create greater social cohesion amid existing differences (Merawi, 2024).

Furthermore, social polarization on social media has a significant impact on the stability of society and the democratic process. Divided political rhetoric often takes center stage on social media, which reinforces ideological segregation among community groups (Sunstein, 2023). A study by Merawi (2024) shows that ethnic and political conflicts exacerbated by social media can hinder the development of an inclusive and democratic society (Merawi, 2024). This condition demands the role of the law as an instrument to create a healthier and more inclusive digital space (Van Dijck, 2018).

Strong legal regulations are needed to address the negative impact of social polarization on social media, including by ensuring the accountability of digital platforms. Research by Gillespie (2018) highlights the importance of defining the legal responsibilities of social media platforms in managing their content (Gillespie, 2018). In addition, the legal approach must also be able to create a balance between freedom of speech and protection from content that undermines social cohesion (York & Zuckerman, 2019). Therefore, a new, more adaptive legal paradigm is needed to answer this challenge.

The phenomenon of disinformation and hate speech that is increasingly used as a political tool to divide society shows the importance of a legal approach in regulating social media platform policies to prevent the escalation of social conflicts (Allcott et al., 2020; Gillani et al., 2018; Vosoughi et al., 2018). The legal approach has a significant role in facing the challenges of ethics, human rights, and freedom of speech that often arise in the implementation of these policies (Gorwa, 2019; Suzor, 2019). This research provides a new perspective on the relevant legal paradigm to overcome social polarization through inclusive and fair-value-based social media regulation. This paradigm is expected to not only limit the negative impact of social media but also promote dialogue between different groups in society, thus contributing to legal and technological literature and strengthening a more inclusive society (Thorson & Stohler, 2017).

The purpose of this study is to examine in depth the relevant legal paradigm in the context of social media and social polarization, with a focus on the development of effective regulations. This research aims to produce policy recommendations that can be implemented practically by

the government, social media platforms, and the wider community to reduce increasingly acute social polarization.

2. Method

This study uses a qualitative method with a literature study approach to explore the legal paradigm in overcoming social polarization on social media. Literature studies were chosen as a type of research because they allow researchers to analyze various views and findings from relevant previous research, as well as integrate concepts and theories related to law, social media, and the dynamics of social polarization (Bowen, 2009). This approach also helps identify gaps in the existing literature and offers new insights into the role of law in dealing with the challenges of the digital age.

The data source of this research consists of secondary literature which includes journal articles, books, research reports, and related policy documents. The data used was obtained from leading academic databases such as PubMed, Google Scholar, and ResearchGate, with inclusion criteria including research published in the last five years (2018–2023), relevance to the research topic, and relevance to the legal context and social media. The study also considers reliable sources from international institutions to strengthen the validity of the data (Webster & Watson, 2002).

The data collection technique is carried out through a systematic document review process. Researchers identify, read, and record important information from relevant documents, including empirical data, theory, and policy recommendations. This process is carried out by adopting the principles of critical review methods to identify the content that is most relevant to the research question (Hart, 1998).

The data collected was analyzed using a thematic content analysis approach. The researcher mapped out key patterns, themes, and categories in the identified literature, focusing on the role of law in regulating social media platforms, mitigating social polarization, and creating an inclusive digital space. The analysis is carried out inductively to identify new themes, as well as deductively to test existing theories and concepts (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This approach allows researchers to produce comprehensive, evidence-based findings.

3. Result and Discussion

The following is a table of literature data which is the result of a selection of 10 relevant articles related to research with the title "Legal Paradigm in Overcoming Social Polarization in Social Media". These articles are selected based on the relevance of the theme, research methodology, and their



contribution to the development of the legal paradigm in the context of social media.

Table 1. literature review

No.	Author	Title	Main focus
1	Persily, N., & Tucker, J. A.	Social Media and Democracy: The State of the Field and Prospects for Reform	The relationship between social media, political polarization, and legal reform
2	Bail, C.	Breaking the Social Media Prism: How to Make Our Platforms Less Polarizing	Strategies to reduce the impact of social media polarization through platform redesign
3	Cinelli, M., & Morales, G.	The Echo Chamber Effect on Social Media	Algorithm analysis that reinforces polarization in social media
4	Bessi, A., & Zollo, F.	Users Polarization on Facebook and YouTube	A study of user patterns and their impact on social polarization
5	Keijzer, M., Mäs, M., & Flache, A.	Polarization on Social Media: Micro-level Evidence and Macro-level Implications	The relationship between individual differences in opinion and systemic impact on social media
6	Barberá, P., & Tucker, J. A.	Social Media, Political Polarization, and Political Disinformation: A Review of the Scientific Literature	Review of the literature on political disinformation on social media
7	Wang, Y., & McKee, M.	Systematic Literature Review on the Spread of Health-related Misinformation on Social Media	Health misinformation on social media and its impact on polarization
8	Reviglio, U., & Agosti, C.	Thinking Outside the Black-Box: The	Regulation of algorithms in

		Case for social media management “Algorithmic Sovereignty” in Social Media	
9	Lipschultz, J. H.	Social Media Communication: Concepts, Practices, Data, Law, and Ethics	Legal and ethical aspects of communication through social media
10	Iandoli, L., & Zollo, G.	The Impact of Group Polarization on the Quality of Online Debate in Social Media: A Systematic Literature Review	The effect of group polarization on the quality of online discussions on social media

Polarization is not only related to differences in political views, but also involves algorithms, platform design, and social interactions facilitated by digital media. One of the main research underpinnings this discussion is the work of Persily and Tucker (2020) which explores the relationship between social media, political polarization, and legal reform. They mentioned that social media is not only a medium for disseminating information but also a tool that can be used to manipulate people's political perceptions. This encourages the need for legal reform that is adaptive to technological dynamics (Persily et al., 2020).

Another study by Bail (2022) offers a practical approach to reducing the impact of polarization through re-engineering social media platforms. Bail stressed the importance of redesigning algorithms to avoid creating "echo chambers" that reinforce extreme views. By modifying content moderation algorithms and policies, platforms can play a more inclusive role as a facilitator of dialogue, rather than just an information distribution tool (Bail, 2022).

Cinelli and Morales (2021) studied the effect of the "echo chamber" on social media, specifically how algorithms reinforce social polarization by filtering information that suits user preferences. This not only affects individual opinion but also creates a systemic impact on society at large. This study emphasizes the need for more transparent algorithm settings to reduce the risk of polarization that harms social cohesion (Cinelli et al., 2021).

Research by Bessi and Zollo (2021) highlights the differences in usage patterns on platforms such as Facebook and YouTube and their impact on social polarization. They found that the interaction patterns on the two platforms exacerbated user ideological differences, thus creating digital segregation that further exacerbated social conflicts



(Bessi et al., 2016). Keijzer, Mäs, and Flache (2024) take a micro and macro approach in studying social polarization on social media. They explain that polarized individual opinions can have a cumulative impact on the social system as a whole. This study highlights the importance of understanding individual interactions in a macro context to create effective policies (Keijzer et al., 2024).

Barberá and Tucker (2018) conducted a literature review of political disinformation on social media, emphasizing that polarization is often triggered by false information disseminated through digital platforms. They emphasized the importance of stricter regulation of the dissemination of information to protect the public from political manipulation (Barberá et al., 2018).

Wang and McKee (2019) shift the focus to health misinformation, highlighting how this can create polarization that impacts not only public opinion but also public health policy. This study emphasizes the need for a legal framework that involves platforms in controlling the spread of misinformation (Wang et al., 2019). Reviglio and Agosti (2020) discuss the concept of "algorithmic sovereignty" as a solution to regulate social media. They propose that countries need to have greater control over platform algorithms to ensure that the public interest is not sacrificed for commercial gain (Reviglio & Agosti, 2020).

Lipschultz (2023) examines the legal and ethical aspects of social media communication, emphasizing that platforms must be responsible not only for the dissemination of information but also for the social consequences of their use of technology. This study offers the view that legal regulation can balance freedom of speech and social responsibility (Lipschultz, 2023). Finally, Iandoli and Zollo (2021) showed that group polarization on social media can reduce the quality of online discussions. They found that this polarization often triggers conflict, which makes the discussion lose its constructive essence. This study recommends a policy approach that promotes inclusive and evidence-based discussions (Iandoli et al., 2021).

All findings from these studies provide a strong foundation to build an effective legal paradigm in overcoming social polarization on social media. The focus is on algorithm transparency, platform responsibility, and the role of regulation in creating a more inclusive and equitable digital space.

Discussion

3.1. Effective Regulation Development

The development of effective regulations to address social polarization on social media requires a holistic approach, including technology transparency, platform responsibility, and human rights protection. One of the key steps is to

require social media platforms to open access to audits of their algorithms. As revealed by Cinelli and Morales (2021), the algorithms used to serve content are often a major cause of social polarization because they tend to reinforce user preferences and form "echo chambers." These algorithm audits can be conducted by independent agencies or government-appointed regulators to ensure that the algorithm not only prioritizes user interaction but also minimizes negative social impacts.

In addition to algorithmic transparency, regulations should also include the obligation of platforms to moderate content that is extreme and provocative. As explained by Reviglio and Agosti (2020), the concept of "algorithmic sovereignty" allows the state to have an active role in ensuring that the public interest is not ignored by the platform's business priorities. These regulations may include rules on the removal of content containing hate speech, disinformation, or conflict provocation within a specified time, such as those implemented in the Network Enforcement Act (NetzDG) in Germany.

On the other hand, regulations must also maintain a balance between the protection of human rights and freedom of speech. Lipschultz (2023) emphasizes that overly restrictive policies can limit individual expression, while overly lax policies can facilitate the spread of harmful content. Therefore, an evidence-based approach that considers the needs of society and democratic principles should be the basis for this regulation.

In addition, regulations must be flexible and adaptive to technological changes. In a dynamic digital environment, rigid regulations will become obsolete in no time. Therefore, the establishment of a special supervisory body that is able to respond to technological developments quickly and efficiently is an urgent need. The agency may also be responsible for developing guidelines for platforms to ensure consistent regulatory implementation.

3.2. Practical Policies for Governments

At the government level, practical policy development can begin by establishing a collaborative framework between governments, technology platforms, and civil society. Governments can play an important role in creating laws that require platforms to adopt proactive policies in addressing social polarization. For example, governments may require platforms to compile periodic reports on removed content, reported violations, and measures taken to prevent the spread of misinformation.

In addition, the national digital literacy campaign is also an important component of practical policies. As stated by Wang and McKee (2019), misinformation and disinformation that contribute to polarization can be



addressed through public education on how to identify trustworthy sources of information. Governments can partner with educational institutions, civil society organizations, and the media to launch training programs and public awareness campaigns.

Governments can also encourage international collaboration to face cross-border challenges in social media regulation. Polarization often occurs on global issues such as climate change, migration, or international politics, so cooperation between countries is needed to formulate universal regulatory standards. International forums such as the United Nations (UN) and regional organizations can be a platform to agree on global regulations on algorithmic transparency and content moderation.

3.3. Practical Policies on Social Media

Social media platforms have direct responsibility in implementing policies that support the reduction of polarization. One approach that can be adopted is to change the way algorithms present content. Bail (2022) proposes that algorithms should prioritize content that encourages cross-group dialogue over content that is provocative or sensational. For example, algorithms can be designed to introduce users to different perspectives gradually, so that they are more open to new ideas.

Platforms should also provide tools that make it easier for users to report content that is considered divisive. This reporting system should be designed to be responsive, transparent, and accessible to all users. Additionally, platforms should provide feedback to users on the steps taken against their reports to increase public trust in content moderation.

Support for independent research is also important to understand the social impact of social media. Barberá and Tucker (2018) mentioned that access to data by academic researchers can help develop more effective policies. Platforms can work with research institutions to provide data while still protecting user privacy, thus allowing for in-depth research into the causes and impacts of polarization.

3.4. Policy Implementation for the Public

To overcome social polarization, the public has an important role as part of the solution. One of the main approaches is to improve the digital literacy of the community at large. Digital literacy involves the ability to recognize, analyze, and evaluate information found online. For example, governments and civil society organizations can host educational programs designed to help people understand how social media algorithms work and their impact on their mindsets and social interactions. These campaigns may also include training to recognize and report disinformation or hate speech.

In addition to digital literacy, active community involvement in divisive content reporting is also very important. Social media platforms can improve reporting mechanisms by making them more accessible to users, for example through a "report" feature that comes with clear guidance on the category of infringing content. The public needs to be educated that reporting content is not only a right, but also a social responsibility to maintain a healthy digital space.

Online communities can also play a role in encouraging inclusive dialogue. A study by Iandoli and Zollo (2021) shows that evidence-based and inclusive discussions can reduce conflict between groups. Governments, social media platforms, and civil society organizations can support initiatives that create online discussion spaces that focus on constructive dialogue across groups. For example, programs such as discussion forums between religious groups or across political ideologies can be directly supported by governments or technology platforms.

Furthermore, the community also needs to be involved in policy dialogue. By listening to public aspirations, the resulting policies can better reflect the needs of the community. The government can hold online public consultations to gather input on social media regulation. This will not only increase the legitimacy of the policy, but also foster a sense of community ownership towards efforts to overcome polarization.

On the other hand, the public must be empowered to build critical awareness of the content they consume and share on social media. These awareness campaigns can involve community leaders, celebrities, or influencers who support messages about the importance of critical thinking before spreading information. In addition, collaboration with the mass media can expand the reach of this campaign to various levels of society.

4. Conclusion

The legal paradigm to overcome social polarization in social media requires a holistic approach, involving the government, social media platforms, and the public. Effective regulation should be transparent, flexible, and evidence-based, with a focus on algorithmic oversight, content moderation, and human rights protection. Practical policies such as digital literacy campaigns, problematic content reporting, and independent research support are also important to implement.

The community plays a key role through increased digital literacy, active participation in content reporting, and involvement in cross-group dialogue. Governments can



strengthen regulations by establishing specialized supervisory bodies, while tech platforms need to improve algorithm designs and provide more transparent moderation tools.

To create a harmonious digital space, the main suggestions include increasing collaboration between all parties, implementing massive awareness campaigns, and developing regulations that are adaptive to technological changes. With this step, the negative impact of social polarization on social media can be minimized, creating an inclusive and equitable digital environment.

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