Uncovering the Influence of Filter Bubbles: How They Shape Public Opinion and Construct Reality on Social Media

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ABSTRACT

Social media has become an integral part of everyday life, facilitating the exchange of information and interaction between individuals globally. One phenomenon of social media that is gaining increasing attention is filter bubbles, a term that refers to information environments personalized by social media platform algorithms, which tend to reinforce existing views and limit exposure to alternative viewpoints. This research analyzes the impact of filter bubbles on the formation of public opinion and the construction of reality on social media. The research method used involved a thorough search and selection of relevant literature regarding filter bubbles, public opinion, and the realities of social media. Findings suggest that filter bubbles amplify ideological polarization, limit the quality of political participation, and create an environment that amplifies confirmation bias. The impact is not only limited to forming opinions but also has an impact on an individual's mental health and the formation of their identity. While filter bubbles have significant negative impacts, the positive potential of social media in giving voice to marginalized individuals and facilitating social change must also be recognized. The conclusion of this research emphasizes the need for awareness and joint action to overcome the impact of filter bubbles in this digital era.

Keywords: Filter Bubble, Public Opinion, Social Impact, Social Media

INTRODUCTION

Social media has become an integral part of our daily lives, fundamentally changing the landscape of human communication and interaction. Social media is an online platform where users can easily participate, share, and create content, including through blogs, social networks, wikis, forums, and virtual worlds. Blogs, social networks, and wikis are the most common forms of social media used by people around the world. With more than 4 billion active users worldwide, social media has become a major channel for sharing information, views, and experiences (Noorikhsan et al., 2023). However, the impact it has on public opinion and the construction of reality is often complex and not yet fully understood.

Social media has expanded access to information. With more people connected to the internet and social platforms, information can spread quickly and widely, allowing individuals to access news and views from a variety of sources. A study by the Pew Research Center found that 55% of American adults get their news from social media, showing how these platforms have become a primary source of information for many people (Nurmansyah, 2021).

The use of social media in Indonesia has experienced very rapid growth. The growth rate of internet users in Indonesia reached 26%. Data also shows that Indonesians spend an average of 1.5 hours every day surfing the internet. Furthermore, according to data from ICT Watch, the number of cellphone users in Indonesia currently reaches 180 million people out of a total population of around 220 million. In addition, the number of active Instagram users in Indonesia has reached 22 million, as reported by a press release received by CNN

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Indonesia (Illahi & Aditya, 2022). This shows that social media, especially platforms like Instagram, have become very popular among Indonesians and have become an integral part of their daily lives.

The increasingly complex social media ecosystem has played a role in the formation of filter bubbles. Filter bubble refers to a condition where individuals are unconsciously isolated in an information environment that only reinforces their own beliefs and views. This happens because social media platforms' algorithms tend to tailor the content shown to users based on their preferences, limiting their exposure to similar viewpoints. The impact of filter bubbles can be significant, creating polarization of public opinion, reinforcing confirmation bias, and even reducing broad understanding of different perspectives. Therefore, while social media provides vast access to information, it is important to be aware of how filter bubbles can influence the way we understand and interact with the world around us.

The term filter bubble was first coined by Eli Pariser (on Chitra & Musco, 2020) and refers to a condition where individuals are unconsciously isolated in an information environment that only strengthens their own beliefs and views. In the context of social media, filter bubbles are created by algorithms that adjust the content displayed to users based on their preferences.

Filter bubbles can have a significant impact on public opinion and perceptions of reality. For example, they can influence political elections, strengthen ideological polarization, and even affect users' mental health (Keijzer & Mäs, 2022). Although there is significant research on this topic, there is still much to understand about how filter bubbles influence public opinion and shape our reality.

This research aims to determine the influence of filter bubbles in shaping public opinion and constructing reality in the realm of social media. This research explores the complexity of how individuals are unconsciously isolated in an information environment that reinforces their own beliefs and perspectives. The novelty of this research lies in its focus on the specific mechanisms and consequences of filter bubbles, offering deeper insights into their dynamics and implications for social media.

Understanding the mechanisms behind these filter bubbles is important because of their potential impact on political choices, ideological polarization, and mental well-being. Despite much research on this topic, much remains to be understood about how filter bubbles influence public opinion and shape our reality, highlighting the importance of further investigation.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Filter Bubble

The term Filter Bubble was introduced by Eli Pariser in 2011, referring to the phenomenon where online algorithms automatically filter information based on users' preferences, so that they are more likely to be exposed to views and opinions with which they already agree (Chitra & Musco, 2020). This phenomenon leads to the formation of isolated information spaces, where individuals tend to be exposed only to points of view that they like or agree with. As technology develops, filter bubbles are increasingly becoming a concern because of their profound impact on the diversity of views and information accessed by individuals.

Bryant (2020) explained filter bubbles as the result of processes involving information search, perception, selection, and information flow. The information that appears in the filter bubble is adjusted to the relevance of the topic being searched for and the context of the

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problem being faced. Bubble filters, in this context, serve as a way to filter an abundance of information, according to what the user wants. This view is in line with Aridor et al (2020), who describe filter bubbles as tools that effectively provide an information environment that is highly relevant to the user's needs at that time.

However, the benefits of bubble filters also have consequences that can be threatening. Filter bubbles have the potential to reinforce ideological segregation by automatically recommending content that aligns with users' views and opinions. If this happens, it will result in a serious separation of information, which should be addressed with freedom of opinion and understanding of various views.

The main cause of filter bubbles is the personalization algorithms used by online platforms such as social media, search engines, and news sites. These algorithms learn user behavior, including search preferences, interactions, and clicks, to refine and customize the content displayed. Over time, this creates a closed loop where individuals tend to be exposed only to content that supports their views (Masrour et al., 2020).

This is reinforced by Liu et al (2021) argument that an internet based on such a system allows people to join groups that have similar views and values, thereby indirectly separating them from information that contradicts their views. Aditya & Hektanti (2023) also suggest that these algorithms can reduce users' mental flexibility and openness to different topics.

Mental flexibility is important in understanding a problem from various points of view. However, the human tendency to select information that fits our beliefs or views can hinder this flexibility. The inability to see the possible options in a problem can reduce mental flexibility slowly.

Filter bubbles, which act like non-transparent filters by algorithms, limit users' ability to freely select information. This threatens freedom of thought, discussion, and action, which are important aspects in the development of individual thought. Freedom of thought is key to creating creative and rational individuals, and limited filters can reduce the diversity of opinions and perspectives that should be considered (Aridor et al., 2020). When individuals are only exposed to viewpoints that align with their beliefs, this can reinforce extreme beliefs and close the space for dialogue and greater understanding (Wulandari et al., 2021). Studies show that filter bubbles can lead to increased social tensions, political polarization, and increased conflict between groups.

Although filter bubbles are often highlighted as a negative impact of personalization algorithms, there are also arguments that this phenomenon can provide benefits to users. By filtering information, algorithms can help individuals find content that is more relevant and useful to them personally (Bryant, 2020). Filter bubbles have several impacts including:

a. Intellectual Isolation
   Filter bubbles lead to intellectual isolation, where individuals are only exposed to views they have previously agreed with. This reduces the possibility of considering alternative points of view and hinders the development of broad understanding.

b. Social Fragmentation
   Cultural bubbles produced by filter bubbles also have the potential to divide society. The polarity of views is increasing, so that awareness of the diversity of opinions and the right of every individual to speak and be heard is reduced.

c. Impact on Democracy
   Filter bubbles can have a significant impact on public discussion and the democratic process. When individuals are only exposed to one point of view, understanding of complex and diverse issues in society can be limited. This threatens the quality of political participation and democratic decision-making (Keijzer & Mäs, 2022).

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Public Opinion

Public opinion is a reflection of the diversity of views, values, and beliefs held by society regarding various issues and events that occur around them (Siregar, 2021). In political, economic, social, and cultural contexts, public opinion plays an important role as a driver of change and decision-making. Survey data is often used to measure and analyze public opinion, either through direct interviews, telephone, or online (Rizky et al., 2023).

Public opinion can vary greatly depending on a variety of factors, such as social background, education, religion, and personal experience. Mass media also has a big influence in shaping public opinion. Through news coverage, editorials, and analysis, the media has the power to strengthen or change people's views on an issue. A study by Bina (2021) found that media coverage of mental health crises increased public awareness and fueled demand for mental health services. This shows how mass media can act as an agent of social change through forming public opinion.

Not only that, the social media phenomenon has also changed the landscape of public opinion significantly(Noorikhsan et al., 2023). With billions of active users worldwide, platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram have become places where individuals can quickly spread information, influence the opinions of others, and form social movements (Aditia & Hektanti, 2023).

Public opinion can also be influenced by bias and manipulation. Sometimes, survey data can be presented in a misleading way to influence the public's perception of an issue or political candidate (Hadiwijaya, 2023). Additionally, the adoption of algorithms in social media platforms can also create "information bubbles," where individuals tend to be exposed only to views that align with their own beliefs, amplifying polarization and narrowing the diversity of opinion.

The reality on Social Media

Social media has become an integral part of modern life, changing the way we communicate, obtain information, and build social relationships. However, behind its convenience and connectivity, social media also creates a complex and sometimes misleading reality (Aditia, 2021a). One aspect that stands out is identity construction. On social media, individuals have complete control over how they are presented, often choosing to present a curated and curated version of themselves (Liu et al., 2021). This can create a distorted reality, where the picture given does not always reflect actual daily life.

Social media also strengthens filter bubbles or information bubbles. The algorithms of platforms like Facebook and Twitter tend to show users content that aligns with their views and interests, creating an environment where we tend to only be exposed to shared viewpoints and avoid conflicting opinions (Bustanur et al., 2022). This not only strengthens our self-confidence but can also strengthen polarization and narrow the diversity of views in society. Social media has unique characteristics compared to other media as seen below

Aspect	Social Media	Print Media	Digital Media
Reach	Global, targeted demographics	Local/national, limited	Global, accessible online
Interactivity	High (likes, comments, shares)	Limited	Variable, interactive

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Timeliness	Real-time updates	Scheduled publishing	Real-time or scheduled
Cost	Lower (content creation, ads)	Higher (printing, production)	Variable
Accessibility	Anytime, anywhere online	Physical availability	Anytime, anywhere online
Format	Varied (text, images, videos)	Predominantly text/images	Diverse (text, images, etc)
Engagement	High (community interactions)	Limited	Variable

Expanding on the preceding discussion, conducting a comprehensive literature review can significantly fortify the arguments presented in this paper. By synthesizing existing research on filter bubbles and their implications for information exposure and public opinion formation, this study can provide a nuanced understanding of the multifaceted nature of filter bubbles. Drawing on a wide range of scholarly works allows for the exploration of diverse perspectives and the identification of key themes and trends in the literature. Moreover, incorporating insights from previous studies enhances the credibility and rigor of the analysis, enabling a more robust examination of the challenges posed by filter bubbles in the digital age.

Additionally, by acknowledging the positive aspects of social media, such as amplifying marginalized voices and fostering social change, the paper can offer a balanced assessment of the role of filter bubbles in contemporary society. Through a thorough review of the literature, this paper aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on filter bubbles and provide valuable insights for addressing their negative impacts while harnessing the potential of social media for positive societal change.

METHOD

This research is a literature study that adopts a qualitative approach to analyze the influence of filter bubbles in shaping public opinion and the construction of reality on social media. Literature studies allow researchers to explore a deep understanding of a particular topic by collecting, reviewing, and synthesizing existing knowledge from various literary sources such as books, scientific journals, articles, and other documents (Sugiyono, 2019). The literature study was chosen for this topic because of its ability to integrate interdisciplinary insights and consolidate scattered findings into a coherent narrative, thereby providing a holistic understanding of the phenomenon. The research method used involves a thorough search and selection of relevant literature on filter bubbles, public opinion, and the reality of social media. Data collection techniques are mainly carried out through literature studies, where researchers read, study, and analyze texts from various selected literature sources.

The data collected was then analyzed using a thematic approach, which involves identifying key patterns and themes that emerge from the literature that has been collected. Themes likely include the existence and impact of filter bubbles, challenges to objective reality, echo chambers and polarization, algorithmic influence and personalization, and implications for public discourse. Through in-depth reading, organizing data based on themes, and thematic analysis to identify relationships between themes, this research aims to

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provide a comprehensive insight into the complexity of filter bubbles and their implications for public opinion and reality in the realm of social media. The analysis stages include in-depth reading, organizing data based on themes, and thematic analysis to identify relationships between themes. Thus, it is hoped that this research can provide in-depth insight into the complexity of filter bubbles and their implications for public opinion and reality in the realm of social media.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION
Shaping Public Opinion By Filter Bubble

The formation of public opinion by filter bubbles is a complex phenomenon and influences various aspects of people's lives in this digital era. Filter bubbles, created by social media platform algorithms, play a crucial role in guiding individuals' exposure to information, which in turn shapes their perception of issues and the reality around them (Dharma, 2018). Research has shown that filter bubbles tend to isolate individuals in an information environment that reinforces their own beliefs and views, reducing their chances of being exposed to alternative viewpoints and narrowing the diversity of opinion in society. The impact of this filter bubble is very significant, especially in the context of forming public opinion.

Filter bubbles have the potential to reinforce ideological polarization in society in very detrimental ways. By presenting content that aligns with existing views, social media algorithms reinforce individual beliefs without providing adequate exposure to differing viewpoints. This leads to the creation of two increasingly polarized camps, with little room for dialogue and greater understanding. Studies show that individuals caught in filter bubbles tend to further strengthen their views and reject information that does not match their beliefs, which ultimately increases social and political tensions in society.

Filter bubbles can also reduce the quality of political participation and public discussion. By presenting information according to user preferences, social media algorithms limit an individual's exposure to multiple viewpoints and in-depth analysis of complex issues. As a result, individuals may not have sufficient understanding to participate effectively in public discussions or make political decisions based on broad understanding. This threatens the quality of democracy and community development based on inclusive dialogue and deep understanding.

Filter bubbles can also create an information environment that reinforces confirmation bias. By presenting content that aligns with existing beliefs, social media algorithms confirm individual views without leaving room for critical consideration or evaluation. This results in individuals increasingly tending to ignore or reject information that conflicts with their own beliefs, which in turn deepens polarization and narrows the diversity of opinion in society.

Even though filter bubbles have a significant impact on shaping public opinion, it is important to remember that this phenomenon is also complex and requires diverse approaches to dealing with it. One strategy that can be used is to increase media and information literacy in society so that individuals are better able to identify and overcome filter bubbles in their information consumption (Mawarni & Agustang, 2022). Additionally, there needs to be an effort by social media platforms to increase transparency in the use of personalization algorithms, so that individuals can better understand how content is filtered and presented to them. With a holistic and collaborative approach, communities can work

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together to overcome the negative impacts of filter bubbles while harnessing the positive potential of social media to create meaningful change in society.

Filter bubbles can also have a significant impact on an individual's mental health. When caught in an information environment that reinforces their own beliefs, individuals are likely to be exposed to content that reinforces anxiety, tension, and dissatisfaction with their lives. Constant exposure to content that reinforces negative views can increase the risk of stress, depression, and anxiety disorders. This especially impacts those who are emotionally vulnerable or may lack the ability to differentiate between valid and invalid information. Filter bubbles can also create an environment where individuals feel isolated or ignored by groups who have different views and values, which can ultimately impact their overall emotional well-being.

It is important to remember that filter bubbles are not an isolated phenomenon, but are often interconnected with broader issues in the social media ecosystem. One of the main problems is the spread of fake news or hoaxes, which can easily spread through isolated information environments and reinforce false beliefs. Therefore, efforts to overcome filter bubbles must be accompanied by efforts to reduce the spread of fake news and increase information literacy in society as a whole (Saydati et al., 2023). This requires collaboration between social media platforms, governments, and civil society to identify and respond to misleading content quickly and effectively.

Apart from that, filter bubbles can also influence the process of forming individual identities. By serving content that fits existing preferences and views, social media algorithms can influence how individuals view themselves and their place in society. This can lead to the formation of a narrow or distorted identity, where individuals may find it difficult to explore different aspects of themselves or open themselves to new experiences and views. For example, young individuals who are susceptible to the influence of social media may experience pressure to conform to trends or norms that may not align with their values or identity.

The filter bubble operates by leveraging algorithms employed by social media platforms to curate and personalize the content that users see based on their past behaviors, preferences, and interactions. Breakdown of the mechanisms by which it functions:

a. Personalized Content Delivery: Social media platforms track users' online behaviors, such as likes, shares, comments, and the type of content they engage with. Using this data, algorithms generate personalized content feeds tailored to each user's preferences and interests. This means that users are more likely to see content that aligns with their existing beliefs and viewpoints.

b. Confirmation Bias Reinforcement: The filter bubble reinforces confirmation bias by presenting users with content that confirms their existing beliefs and perspectives. When users are repeatedly exposed to content that aligns with their views, they are more likely to accept it without critically evaluating its validity. This further solidifies their beliefs and creates an echo chamber effect where dissenting opinions are rarely encountered.

c. Limited Exposure to Diverse Viewpoints: Filter bubbles restrict users' exposure to diverse viewpoints and alternative perspectives on various issues. Since the algorithm prioritizes content similar to what users have previously interacted with, they are less likely to encounter opposing viewpoints or content that challenges their beliefs. This can lead to a narrow understanding of complex issues and hinder the development of informed opinions.

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d. Ideological Polarization: Filter bubbles contribute to the polarization of society by reinforcing existing ideological divides. As users are exposed to content that aligns with their beliefs, they become more entrenched in their positions and less receptive to alternative viewpoints. This exacerbates social and political tensions, as individuals from different ideological backgrounds become increasingly isolated from one another.

e. Reduction in Information Quality: The personalized nature of content delivery within filter bubbles can lead to a reduction in the quality of information available to users. Since the algorithm prioritizes engagement over accuracy or reliability, users may be exposed to sensationalized or misleading content that reinforces their biases. This can undermine public discourse and critical thinking, as users may struggle to discern fact from fiction in their information consumption.

f. Impact on Mental Health: Filter bubbles can have negative implications for users' mental health by perpetuating feelings of anxiety, stress, and dissatisfaction. Constant exposure to content that reinforces negative beliefs or perspectives can contribute to feelings of isolation and alienation, particularly for emotionally vulnerable individuals. This can have long-term consequences for individuals' well-being and contribute to a sense of social disconnection.

The filter bubble operates by creating personalized information environments that reinforce users' existing beliefs, limit exposure to diverse viewpoints, and contribute to ideological polarization and reduced information quality. By understanding these mechanisms, we can begin to address the negative impacts of filter bubbles on public opinion and promote more inclusive and informed discourse in society.

In overcoming the impact of filter bubbles, it is important to make joint efforts from various parties, including the government, social media platforms, academics, and civil society. There need to be efforts to increase media and information literacy in society, encourage transparency in the use of personalization algorithms, and promote inclusive and open dialogue about the impact of social media in shaping public opinion and reality in society. With strong cooperation, society can move forward toward a more responsible and inclusive use of social media in this digital era. This requires a long-term commitment to understanding and addressing the complex issues associated with social media, as well as a readiness to adopt innovative and collaborative approaches to achieve positive change in society.

Reality on Social Media Due to Filter Bubble

Reality on social media, as a product of filter bubbles, is a phenomenon that is increasingly strengthening in the digital ecosystem. Filter bubbles create an environment where individuals are less likely to be exposed to content that only reinforces beliefs and views they already agree with (Aditia, 2021b). In the context of social media, personalization algorithms tend to select and present content to users based on their preferences, which in turn narrows the diversity of views that individuals have access to. As a result, the reality that social media users understand and internalize is often distorted and fragmented, creating a gap between their online worldview and actual reality.

It is important to understand that filter bubbles are not an isolated phenomenon; their impact permeates various aspects of life on social media (Faulina et al., 2020). One of the most striking impacts is the role of filter bubbles in increasing the spread of fake news or hoaxes. By limiting individuals' exposure to content that only reinforces their views, filter bubbles create a fertile environment for the spread of invalid or misleading information. This

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threatens the integrity of the information presented on social media, causing a decline in public trust in media platforms and institutions as a whole.

The reality of social media is also influenced by social and psychological pressure generated by filter bubbles. By showing idealistic or carefully curated content, social media can create pressure on individuals to present the best version of themselves. Phenomena such as "fear of missing out" (FOMO) encourage individuals to showcase the best moments of their lives, creating the impression that a perfect life is the norm. However, the actual reality is often far from the image shown on social media, creating a gap between expectations and reality.

Reality on social media also creates social disparities that can deepen divisions in society (Aridho et al., 2024). By strengthening filter bubbles, social media can separate individuals into groups with similar views and values, reducing interaction between groups and narrowing the diversity of opinion. This can strengthen social and political polarization, creating greater tensions between groups with different views.

In overcoming the impact of filter bubbles on reality on social media, it is important to make joint efforts from various parties. Governments, social media platforms, academia, and civil society need to work together to identify and address problems associated with filter bubbles, including the spread of fake news, social pressure, and social polarization. This requires a holistic and collaborative approach to address the complex challenges faced in today's social media ecosystem. With strong cooperation, society can move forward toward a more responsible and inclusive use of social media in this digital era.

CONCLUSION

This research reveals the complexity of filter bubbles and their impact on the formation of public opinion and the construction of reality on social media. Based on the findings discussed, filter bubbles formed by social media platform algorithms play an important role in shaping public opinion and constructing perceived reality in the digital era. These algorithms personalize content based on a user's past behavior and preferences, resulting in an environment that reinforces existing beliefs and limits exposure to diverse viewpoints. This personalization fosters confirmation bias, ideological polarization, and a decline in the quality of information, which undermines public discourse and critical thinking. Additionally, filter bubbles can negatively impact mental health by perpetuating feelings of stress, anxiety, and social isolation. To overcome this challenge, collaborative efforts are needed from governments, social media platforms, academia, and civil society. The strategy should focus on increasing media and information literacy, ensuring transparency in algorithmic personalization, and encouraging inclusive and open dialogue. By understanding and mitigating the impact of filter bubbles, society can work towards more responsible and inclusive use of social media, ultimately fostering more informative and cohesive public discourse.

The conclusions of this research emphasize the need for collective awareness and action to overcome the impact of filter bubbles in this digital era. With an integrated and proactive approach, society can utilize social media responsibly and inclusively, and encourage the formation of diverse public opinions and positive mental health amidst the challenges faced in the social media ecosystem.

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