

## THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AS A MEANS OF POLITIC EDUCATION FOR YOUNG FIRST-TIME VOTERS

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### Abstract

Social media opens up opportunities for voters, especially beginners, to access a variety of information about politics. First-time voters on many occasions are young people who have never voted or voted in an election. They are the main target for politicians and parties because of their huge numbers, high enthusiasm in participating in elections and curiosity related to this largest democratic party. This group also belongs to the generation with a high level of social media users. This exposure to social media has an impact on their political activity engagement.

This research is titled The Role of Social Media as a Means of Political Education for Young Novice Voters. Aims to find out about the role of social media in shaping the voter behavior of young novice voters in Indonesia. In this study, the method used was qualitative with a case study approach. This research takes place in a natural situation and illustrates the interconnectedness of the social media process as a tool for political education among young first-time voters to then shape their political knowledge and attitudes.

The results showed that the use of social media had an impact on increasing information knowledge and voting behavior. Some of the things behind it can be seen from the accessibility of social media in disseminating and the rapid turnover of information. Influence young voters who have not made a choice. This accessibility also allows for seamless interaction. Social media with more interesting content, language that is more familiar to young people provides a more desirable choice compared to learning through conventional media. Involvement in political discussions, voicing issues among them and the ease of strengthening support through voting and other cyber activities for candidates are easily accommodated on social media. Keywords: Social media, Beginner young voters, political education

### 1 INTRODUCTION

The use of social media has become a close part of the lifestyle of the younger generation. This relationship feels closer than conventional media. For the younger generation, social media is not just a means of self-existence and communication between friends but widens to be a source of reference in finding information about current issues, including political issues. Social media helps young people connect without time and space with political and social issues, become a means of conveying personal opinions and sharing views with other individuals more broadly,

This phenomenon attracted the attention of candidates and political parties to penetrate social media as a means of campaigning in political years. Social media has become a key driver of political involvement among millennials, with politicians and political marketing experts

optimizing their marketing activities on social media platforms to encourage political participation (Hamid, Abror, Anwar, & hartati, 2022). These young people are the main targets of social media campaigns due to the large number of users and their association with social media. This age range is also included in the group that is familiar with internet use. The survey results released by the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII) show that the number of people connected to the internet in the 2022-2023 period is 215,626,156 people out of a total population of 275,773,901 people Indonesia's population in 2022 with the largest users comes from 98.20% of those 13-18 years old in the first rank and 97.17% with an age range of 19-34 years in second position (APJII, 2023). Many of these age compositions are first-time voters in elections.

In the Voter Education Guidelines written by the KPU RI in 2015, novice voters are those who enter voting age and who will exercise their right to vote for the first time in elections. With the election cycle in Indonesia held every five years, the age range of novice voters is 17-21 years. The average group of voters is those who are pursuing higher education and young workers, or in other words high school graduates.

First-time voters are strategically targeted for many reasons. First, the number of first-time voters in each election is quite large. Second, they are Indonesian citizens (WNI) who are voting for the first time in the election so they need to be given good direction in order to have a good understanding of democracy. Third, they are future leaders so that by exploring and knowing their views on democracy, we can provide what they need as provisions in the future (KPU, 2015).

Novice voters consisting of students, students or voters with an age range of 17-21 years are a segment that is indeed unique, often raises surprises and certainly promises in quantity. Called unique, because the behavior of novice voters with high enthusiasm, relatively more rational, thirsty for change and thin levels of pragmatism pollution (Wardhani, 2018).

These young voters grew up in the digital age and the use of social media allows them to voice messages, participate in socio-political life, self-actualize platforms by engaging in activities voicing issues they consider important to participate in social and political movements. But on the one hand, social media is considered to create echo chambers that reinforce mass media's messages without context or fact-checking, which can affect the public's perceptions of candidates and their platforms (<https://online.maryville.edu/blog/social-media-influence-on-elections/>), n.d.). So that the turnover of information flows that are so large and

wide on social media cannot be swallowed raw without an information filter. Here the role of political education is needed to provide mature provisions for young novice voters in activities. In the end, research on social media as a means of political education for young first-time voters is important for two reasons. First, political education raises awareness for young novice voters to participate in guarding the course of this grand democratic party. The growth of awareness is expected to go hand in hand with the responsibility as a virtuous political person. Because the polarization of political camps in cyberspace that leads to blind fanaticism towards prospective leaders is very likely to occur and have a negative impact without sufficient political provisions. Second, the use of social media as a channel for political education should be considered by looking at their digital skills and familiarity with social media.

## **2 METHODOLOGY**

This study was designed using qualitative descriptive methods to explore social situations that occur thoroughly. The unit of analysis focuses on individuals who are first-time voters aged 17-21, have never voted in a general election, and have the right to vote as a key source. The availability of data in this study was obtained through interviews using guidelines in accordance with the research problem and the capacity of informants as primary data sources. Supporting data in the form of documentation, writings obtained through the official website, previous research contained in journals or other records related to problems in this study. Data analysis techniques start from transcribing interview results to focus on important data so as to obtain basic data. Furthermore, it is displayed in the form of a description of how the phenomenon occurs.

## **3 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **3.1 Political Education**

Political education for citizens is an important part of well-rounded education that teaches people about government structures and systems, allowing them to be better informed and involved in their political environment (Shriver, 2023). Political education can serve multiple purposes, such as teaching about citizenship or preparing people to vote (Shriver, 2023). The essence of political education is to create citizen knowledge and skills, where the younger generation gains an understanding of the process of governance, prevalent political ideology, civic and social responsibilities, and the importance of citizen involvement (Winthrop, 2020).

One of the objectives of political education is community involvement in the electoral process by contributing to the right to vote. Provision of understanding related to elections is a requirement for the creation of elections based on direct, general, free, secret, honest and fair.

General Election Commission Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia Number 10 of 2018 article 1 paragraph 25 explains that voter education is the process of delivering information about the stages and programs of holding elections. The main purpose of voter education is to create and produce quality democracy and suppress threatening political attitudes and cultures such as money politics, divisions in society regarding identity politics, and transactional politics and fraudulent practices in the electoral process (Zulkarnain & Saufi, 2021). The urgency of education for voters is an important need for young first-time voters. This group is projected to be a potential group of big voice contributors within. Data released by CNN shows generation z has the potential to determine the outcome of the election

Table 1. 2024 Election Voter Turnout by Age Classification

No	Usia	Generasi	Jumlah
1	Dibawah 17 tahun		6.697
2	Lahir 1997-2012	Gen Z	46.800.161
3	Lahir 1981-1996	Generasi Milenial	68.822.389
4	Lahir 1965-1980	Gen X	57.486.482
5	Lahir 1946-1964	Baby Boomer	28.127.340
6	Lahir sebelum 1945	Pre-boomer	3.570.850

Source: KPU RI (processed by CNN, 2023)

The potential for large votes and the enthusiasm for the first time to be involved in the electoral process are two combinations that need to be guarded from the involvement of generation z in elections through voter education. A good understanding of the electoral process will lead these voters towards a rational choice with the support of accurate information, regarding the candidate/party supported.

The trend of social media utilization and its relation to elections tends to increase along with the increasingly massive use of social media. Observed in the category of political parties, the Twitter account belonging to the Democratic Party with the username @Demokrat occupied the first position with a total of 224.53 thousand followers, followed by PKB with 125.43 thousand and the third position occupied by the Gerindra Party in @Gerindra with 672.03 thousand followers. (Princess, 2023). This fact is supported by data released by APJII, placing

politics, social, law and human rights in the top position regarding the 3 most visited content based on gender with a percentage of 33.94% male users.

Social media platforms also provide various ways for users to engage with political content, such as liking, sharing, and commenting, which can further enhance their involvement in the political process (Hernandez, 2019). Several reasons why political education is important especially for young first-time voters. First, political education builds critical thinking in analyzing political promises, social capital to see the integrity and capability of the track record of the political figure or candidate. Second, to mold young voters to know the needs of their groups, shape opinions, ensure that their voices are heard and ultimately influence the policy level. Third, building awareness about the importance of voting rights, by voting for these young first-time voters has contributed to creating a healthier democratic climate, and realizing that their votes have a positive impact on the expected changes.

### **3.2 Social Media Effectiveness**

Political education can take place in many different forms, such as political courses offered as electives or woven into existing core curriculum in schools, community programs, volunteer opportunities, engaging workshops, or lectures that may occur in libraries, churches, and other public venues (Shriver, 2023). Dewasa ini dengan pesatnya perkembangan dunia digital, pendidikan politik telah merambah saluran pembelajaran melalui pemanfaatan media sosial.

Offering easy, fast and massive accessibility in disseminating and exchanging information, it is not uncommon to make social media an option for early voters in finding information and adding references to knowledge about elections. The effectiveness of using social media as a learning tool shows that political education does not only occur in real space but in cyberspace where interactions that occur can take place in real time.

Basically, social media is the latest development product of internet-based technology, this technological development makes it easier for each individual to carry out the process of communication, participation, sharing and forming networks online so that individuals can disseminate their communication content (Astari, 2021).

For young voters, the use of social media offers a variety of materials that are freely available. Articles, videos, live streams, podcats are just a few examples of material that can be accessed for free and played back at any time. Here the dimensions of affordability and ease of access

from the use of social media are seen. In the Instagram platform, for example, several accounts such as vodem.id, bijakmemilih.id, pinterpolitik present informative content about politics and about elections. Vodem.id presents informative content about elections in various parts of the world. This account often also holds live streams discussing themes around young candidates, golput or other elections. Bijakchoose, id and pinterpolitik raise themes that are not much different from vodem.id, political issues or recent elections are displayed in an attractive and language that is easily understood by young people. Some of these advantages are the attraction of using social media as a medium of election education. The account from Pinterpolitik even has more than 473,000 followers on Instagram.



picture 1. Instagram account vodem.id

However, the use of social media can not entirely be an educational medium for first-time voters. Information and its rapid turnaround and the amount of news that changes are prone to raise doubts among these young first-time voters about the information circulating. The use of social media as a means of finding information about elections needs to be accompanied by the cultivation of political education and skills in social media. If this does not go side by side, the flow of information will make it difficult for these young people to filter out verified information. The lower the level of political education, the harder it is to be aware of misleading, false, or manipulated information.

By seeing the huge potential votes of young first-time voters, the government is obliged to build wise political awareness through political education. There are several steps that the government can take. First, support in the form of clear policies and strict rules regarding social media. This step is also a form of enforcement against disseminators of false information.

Second, increasing public education aimed at improving ethics in social media, increasing awareness of how to recognize and filter various kinds of information circulating on social media. The target of this public education is not only targeting the public as users but also content creators to be wise and careful in creating and disseminating content in political hot years such as election periods. It is important to realize that the spread of false information is prone to occur in social media without borders, but governments can support the use of social media wisely to build awareness of political issues.

Overall, social media has become one of the mediums or tools that should be considered as a channel for political education with a wider reach, opening opportunities for more active participation and more effective organizing. Fair and dignified elections are certainly the hope of every party, the most basic way to realize is by educating young first-time voters because change is in their hands.

#### **4 CONCLUSION**

Young voters with their attachment to social media make it an effective channel in political education for young first-time voters. The use of social media can provide a variety of educational information to increase voting awareness and views on various issues that are happening during election times. The effectiveness offered will help achieve the goals of political education with awareness from education providers to continue to maintain the accuracy of information to avoid negative impacts that arise such as hoaxes, manipulation of data information to extreme political polarization.

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