

Millennials' Perception of the Practice of Democracy

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Abstract. The practice of democracy faces challenges and opportunities from communication technology advancement, which facilitates the public to access political information and to participate directly in various democracy practices. Considering the development in democracy practices, this study aimed to discover millennials' perception of the practice of democracy in relation to technological advancement. It employed survey method with quantitative approach. The respondents were 112 people from state and private universities selected through purposive sampling. The results showed that respondents' level of trust on democracy practices such as general election and on credibility of political figures and institutions were quite high. This perception needs to be improved through implementation of democracy practices that give priority to objectivity, sincerity, and fairness, which are shown in political activities and responsive efforts from the government to ensure the fulfilment of people's rights. Meanwhile, social media as a channel for political information needs to optimize its educational, monitoring, and public-opinion shaping functions as part of ideal democracy practice implementation.

Keywords: Democracy; Perception; Millennials; Social Media; Political Communication

1 Introduction

Based on its definition, democracy is a governmental system in which power is vested in the people. Democracy can be a means for a nation to resolve social and political relationships, to satisfy the needs of the people and not just that of one particular group, to rectify or develop inter-communities relationships, and even to develop international relationships. Conceptually, democracy is a way for people to elect their political leader from those who compete for public votes in various political contests. Through democracy practices, every individual has the same rights to participate in the forming of institution to achieve political power (Nugroho, 2015). A representative who obtained power through practice of democracy should be held accountable to those who has elected them, not just to their political party. In this case, the people are the ones who elect the representative, which means that power and authority of the elected representative should be based on people's need and should be used for realizing public welfare. Democracy also serves as problem-solver or conflict resolution means through certain norms that prioritize the interests of all parties, not just one particular group (Yunitasari et al., 2017).

Every nation has its own unique characteristics in implementing democracy practices. In Indonesia, pluralism is the main characteristic of democracy practices (Nur, 2019). The plurality amidst the people presents certain challenges in practicing democracy. The plurality is evident in ethnicities and cultures, religions, and characteristics based on age groups. The challenges in democracy practices implementation emerge not only from the plurality of Indonesian people. Challenges, as well as opportunities, also emerge from the development in digital media, particularly the social media. The use of internet and social media plays important role in democracy practices, especially in shaping public opinion. As a media for political campaign, internet can be a very useful one. Internet allows its users to communicate vertically, top-to-bottom and vice versa, so that an effective political communication can be realized and will support democracy practices. As part of the internet, social media such as Facebook and Instagram can contribute in increasing public pressure. The opportunities to create conversation in social media indicates the emergence of a new public platform for implementing democracy practices (Indrawan & Ilmar, 2018).

Information delivered through social media can be disseminated in a more egalitarian way than those delivered through conventional media. It means that everyone has the same opportunity to spread information since the function of social media is not dominated by powerful people with large capital. Social media can provide a universal access for information in political communication. Various features of social media allow the users to form associations based on shared ideas and discourses they consume. With the power of social media, it certainly plays a role in strengthening democracy practices in a nation (Rahmawati, 2016). The use of internet and social media for finding information is closely related to the youth, especially the millennials. In addition to being dependent on the internet, this generation of people is also highly curious and creative. Millennials also show big ego and ambition (Roza, 2020). Considering the years they were born in, millennials certainly play a huge role in affecting changes and determining social construction in the future. Moreover, the rapid advancement technology, millennials' ability to optimize the use of technology will support the development of social construction, including in democracy practices.

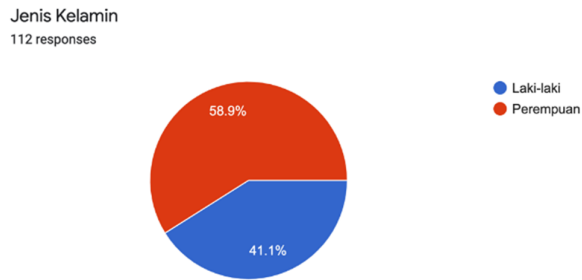
As an effort to optimize the role of the millennials in implementing democracy practices, their perception about democracy has to be developed first. Perception is a series of process to select, organize, and interpret messages (Febrida & Oktavianti, 2020). Perception is related to political awareness which will affect community groups to perform political activities. The level of youth participation will become higher if the levels of trust and democracy satisfaction among them are also high (Hasbi Wahyudi et al., 2013). Considering the importance of millennials' role in democracy practices, the present study was conducted to discover millennials' perception of the practice of democracy and the use of social media as a channel for political information.

2 Methodology

This study was conducted using survey method, with quantitative approach. Purposive sampling was used to select sample based on certain criteria. 112 respondents participated in this study online, through google form.

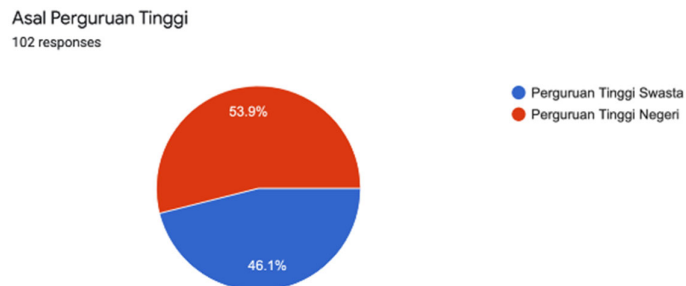
3 Result and Discussion

Discussing perception on democracy practices will be closely related to democracy assessment, indicated by the level of public trust towards democracy practices implemented by government institutions who has the authority to make policies. In Indonesia, government institutions are grouped into executive, judicative, and legislative institutions. This study also measured public's level of trust towards various figures and organization supporting democracy practices, including political figures and elites, community organizations, and political parties. The responses of respondents are displayed as follow.



Source: Research Finding
Fig. 1. Respondents' Sex

Based on the results of questionnaire distribution, it was found that majority of respondents were female (58.9%) and male (41.1%).

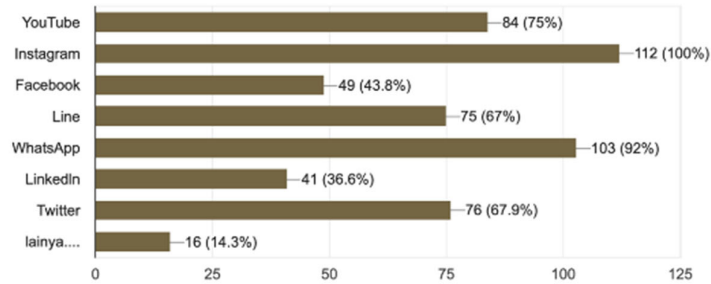


Source: Research Finding
Fig. 2. University Origin

Based on the finding, it was known that 53.9% of respondents were from state universities while 48.1% were from private universities.

Platform media sosial yang dimiliki (jawaban boleh lebih dari satu)

112 responses



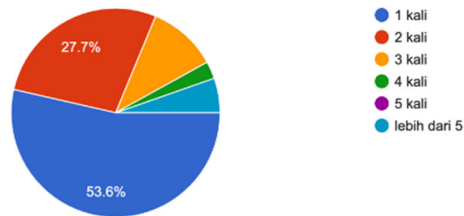
Source: Research Finding

Fig. 3. Social Media Platform Used

Based on the graph in Figure 3, it was found that all respondents used Instagram. The next most used social media was WhatsApp, selected by 92% (103) respondents, followed by Youtube (75%), Line (67%), Twitter (67.9%), Facebook (43.8%), LinkedIn (36.6%), and other social media (14.3%).

Intenstias mencari informasi berita politik dalam sehari

112 responses

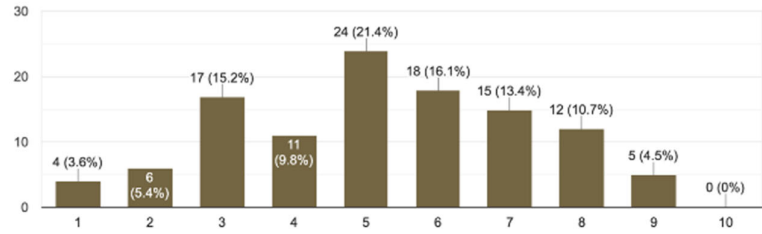


Source: Research Finding

Fig. 4. Intensity of Searching for Political News in a Day

Based on the findings, it was known that majority of respondents searched for political news 1 time a day (53.6%). The next most common intensity of searching for political news was 2 times a day (27.7%).

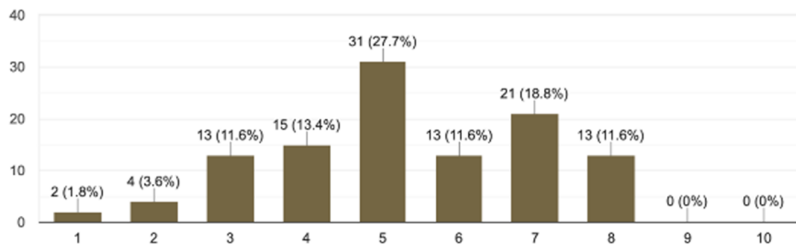
Pelaksanaan pemilu di indonesia sudah berlangsung secara langsung, umum, bebas, rahasia, jujur dan adil
112 responses



Source: Research Finding
Fig. 5. Implementation of General Election in Indonesia

Based on the result, it was known that respondents had not fully trusted the implementation of general election to be based on the direct, public, free, confidential, honest, and fair principles. It was evident from the number of respondents who gave 5 score on the scale (24 respondents or 21.4%). The scale ranged from 1 to 10, in which 1 indicated very not trusting and 10 indicated very trusting. Public trust on the implementation of general election principles is important, considering that general election represents the democracy system in a nation. Political stability is greatly influenced by the implementation of general election principles of direct, public, free, confidential, honest, and fair. Political resilience will be prone to attack when the public do not trust the implementation of general election principles. It is because the public will not feel safe and secure, which will cause unrest during the general election (Merly, 2016).

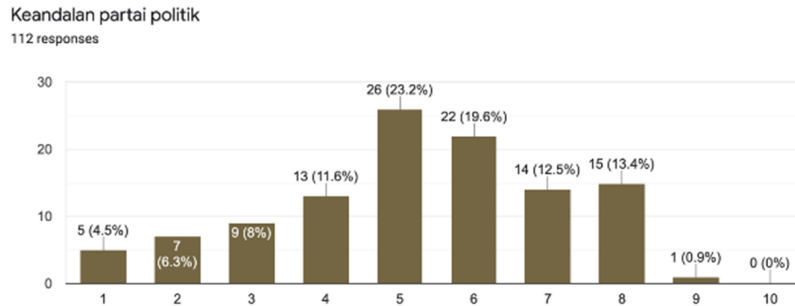
Kredibilitas tokoh-tokoh atau elite politik
112 responses



Source: Research Finding
Fig. 6. Credibility of Political Figures

Based on the questionnaire, majority of respondents (31 people or 27.7%) indicated trust level for political figures' and elites' credibility scored 5 on a scale of 1 – 10. Meanwhile, 21 people (18.8%) responded that their trust level for political figures' and elites' credibility scored 7. The highest level of trust was 8 point, indicated by 13 respondents (11.6%). Since most respondents gave score 5 out of 10 regarding their level of trust toward political figures' credibility, it should be greatly considered by various elements of the society. Public trust will

affect the number of non-voters in general election. Non-voters choose not to vote for anyone to indicate public dissatisfaction with the candidates proposed by political parties. In addition, the increase in public dissatisfaction also occurs in loyal voters (Juditha, 2014). Credibility is the quality, capability, or ability to inspire trust. Public trust is affected by objectivity, sincerity, and fairness shown by the source of information. Social responsibility that political figures display also affects public trust (Juditha, 2014).

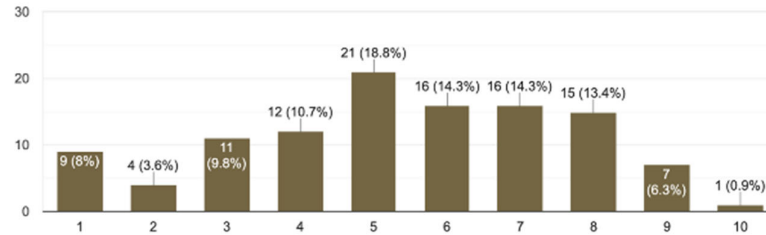


Source: Research Finding
Fig. 7. Reliability of Political Parties

Based on the result, respondents gave quite diverse answers in terms of their perception of political parties' reliability. 26 people (23.2%) gave a score of 5 out of 10, indicating that they quite trusted political parties. Meanwhile, 22 people (19.6%) gave score 6 out of 10, 15 respondents (13.4%) gave a score of 8, and 14 respondents (12.5%) gave a score of 7. The highest score respondents gave was 9 out of 10 (1 respondent) and the lowest score was 1 out of 10 (5 respondents or 4.5%). Public trust towards political parties' reliability affects public voting behaviors during general election. The role that political parties play in democracy practices can be seen from their ability to bring political issues to the public. Therefore, the relationship between the public and political parties will be affected by the process through which the former received the issues delivered by figures in political parties (Wahidin et al., 2020). Another factor that causes the decrease in public trust towards political parties' reliability is the failure of the party in recruitment process to come up with a candidate that suit people's expectation. Efforts that political figures make to gain public trust include the optimization of volunteers to encourage public participation. It was done, for example, in the election of DKI Jakarta Governor in 2017, in which a volunteer group called Teman Ahok was created to encourage the people to gather one million identity cards to satisfy the requirement for nominating an independent (not affiliate with political parties) candidate for the governor position. The phenomenon became an autocritique towards the existence of political parties in democracy practices. (Arianto, 2019).

Keberadaan gerakan organisasi masyarakat (Ormas)

112 responses



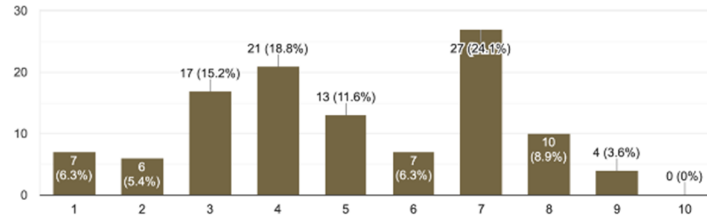
Source: Research Finding

Fig. 8. Existence of Community Organizations

Based on the finding, it was known that the level of respondents' trust in the existence of the Community Organization in the implementation of democracy in Indonesia is quite diverse. The majority of respondents showed a level of trust on a scale of 5 out of 10 (21 people or 18.8%). The level of trust with a scale of 7 to 8 is shown by 15 and 16 respondents, respectively. The highest level of trust was shown by 1 respondent (0.9%), with a score of 10 out of 10, while the lowest level of trust was shown by 9 people or 8%. The questionnaire showed that the level of public trust in the existence of community organizations was not entirely high. Government practice and implementation of democracy are influenced not only by government institutions but also by the public, which is represented by non-governmental institutions such as NGOs or other community organizations (Nawawi, 2009).

Kebijakan pemerintah berpihak pada rakyat

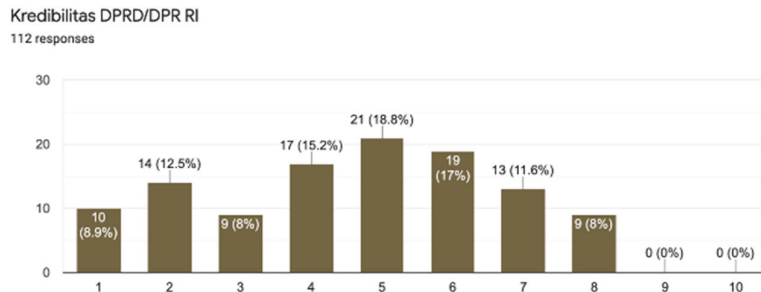
112 responses



Source: Research Finding

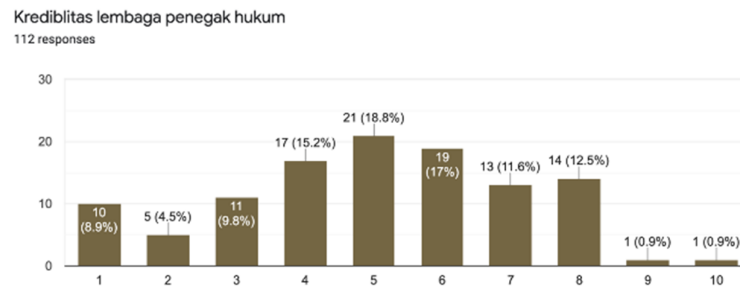
Fig. 9. Government Policies Side with the People

Based on the results, 27 respondents (24.1%) gave a score of 7 out of 10, indicating that the public trust that government policies sided with the people. The second highest level of trust was shown by 21 people (18.8%) who gave a score of 4 out of 10. A score of 3 was given by 17 respondents (15.2%). The government can improve public trust by implementing democracy principles and showing responsive attitude in serving the public. In addition to increase public trust, responsive efforts can uphold democracy principles, encourage development in all regions, and promote effectiveness in public service (Nyoman et al., 2019). One of the efforts that government can do is formulating policies that suit public needs and side with the people.



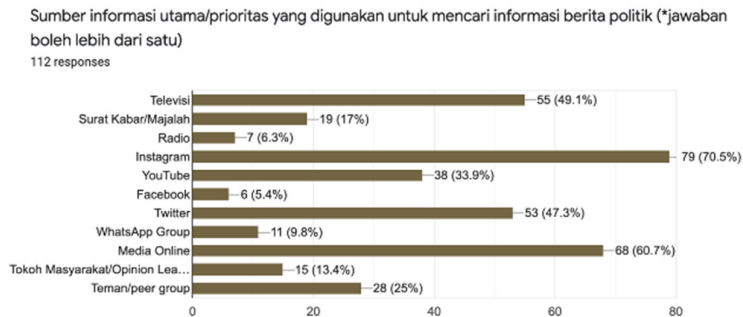
Source: Research Finding
Fig. 10. Credibility of DPRD / DPR-RI

Based on the questionnaire, it could be said that respondents' level of trust towards the credibility of DPRD (Regional Board of Representative) and DPR-RI (Indonesian Board of Representative) was not high. Majority of respondents gave a score of 5 out of 10 (21 people or 18.8%), followed by a score of 6 (19 people or 17%), and a score of 4 (17 people). The lowest level of trust was shown by 10 respondents (8.9%) with a score of 1 out of 10. In national life, public trust towards DPR-RI is important because the institution plays the role of representing the people and making policies for the interest of the people. Low level of public trust will affect the pace of democracy in Indonesia and will reduce the function of DPR as an executive supervisory institution (Yunus & Diyani, 2017). In addition, public trust towards the government, both for executive and legislative institutions, will affect public participation in democracy practices. It will of course affect the policies made by government institutions to satisfy people's needs (Mulyadi, 2019).



Source: Research Finding
Fig. 11. Credibility of Law Enforcement Agencies

Based on the result, it was known that majority of respondents showed low level of trust toward law enforcement agencies. 21 respondents (18.8%) gave a score of 5 out of 10, 19 people (17%) gave a score of 6 out of 10, and 17 people (15.2%) gave a score of 4 out of 10. The lowest level of trust was given by 10 respondents (8.9%) with a score of 1, while the highest level of trust was shown by 1 respondent (0.9%) with a score of 9. One of the factors that affect public trust towards law enforcement agencies is the credibility of the agencies' members (Hidayati, 2014).



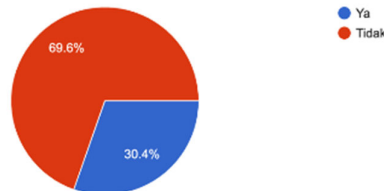
Source: Research Finding

Fig. 12. Primary Source of Information Used to Find Political News

The result showed that the primary media used in searching for political news was Instagram, chosen by 79 respondents (70.5%). It was followed by online media (68 respondents or 60.7%), television (55 people or 49.1%), Twitter (53 people or 47.3%), Youtube (19 respondents or 17%), and other media such as newspapers or magazines, radio, WhatsApp group and Facebook (less than 10%). In addition to media, respondents also obtain political information from public figure (13%) and peer group (25%). The questionnaire showed that Instagram was the primary social media used in finding political information. It is in line with the findings of a study (Dhara et al., 2020), which state that there was a correlation between the contents of a candidate for DKI Jakarta Governor in 2017 with public perception. The formulation of perception required a long process and the large amount of misinformation spreading around during regional general election at the time had made Instagram the most influential social media in shaping public perception. The use of social media, particularly in disseminating political information, has several advantages. Among the advantages are transcending space and time, widely and globally accessible, information can spread quickly, and supporting autocracy government (Waluyo, 2019).

Considering the advantages of social media, no wonder that they can increase public participation in and the implementation of democracy practices. An example of this was the use of social media in campaign efforts during general election. Social media make it possible for the people to have political communication with the elites of political parties. In short, the internet has direct influence on the implementation of political activities (Waluyo, 2019). The function of social media as a source of political information used by millennial respondents was inseparable from the digital native characteristics of digital gadgets. Whether they want to or not, users will receive information and will interact with information about political parties. A previous study showed that informants who were first-time voters used social media to find information regarding the presidential candidates, learn how to express opinions in social media through the comment columns, and analyze fake political news (Prasetyawan, 2020). The level of public trust towards political and democracy practices in Indonesia will affect public political participation. Hence, it needs to be considered closely (Rafinda & Nurmina, 2019).

Menggunakan atau mengakses informasi/berita politik dari berbagai sumber informasi tersebut untuk disebarluaskan atau didistribusikan kembali
112 responses

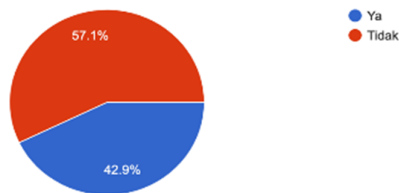


Source: Research Finding

Fig. 13. Disseminating Political Information

Based on the result, it was known that majority of respondents did not distribute political messages after accessing information from various media. The questionnaire showed that 69.6% respondents claimed to not distribute information and 30.4% respondents claimed to do so. Therefore, respondents used social media more as a means to find political information than as a way to disseminate the political information. In its development, new media played a role as a means to express messages and information circulating amidst the public through hashtag and memes. Social media can even serve as a way to gather great number of masses to influence the power of the government. There are several possibilities in which social media can be used, including to gather public support, as a vessel of critiquing the government, and even to change government's attitude and policies (Dwiana, 2015).

Menggunakan atau mengakses informasi/berita politik dari berbagai sumber informasi tersebut untuk mencari teman diskusi
112 responses

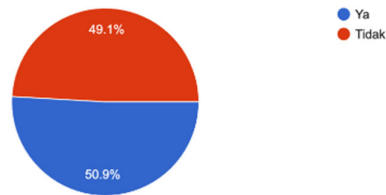


Source: Research Finding

Fig. 14. Accessing Political Information to Have Discussion

Based on the result, 57.1% of respondents did not access political information to have discussion and 42.9% accessed political information to do so. Considering that the respondents were millennials who spent a lot of time on social media, it was not wonder that most of them used social media to find information rather than to have a discussion. Social media as a channel of political communication can shape political behavior, which is related to the information disseminated through social media that can shape public opinion (Siagian, 2015).

Menggunakan atau mengakses informasi/berita politik dari berbagai jenis sumber informasi tersebut untuk kebutuhan hiburan
112 responses

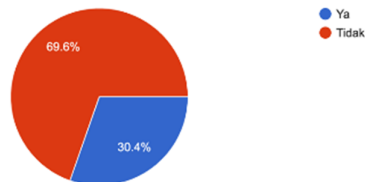


Source: Research Finding

Fig. 15. Accessing Political Information for Entertainment

Based on the result, majority of respondents accessed political information for entertainment (50.9%), while 49.1% accessed political information not for that purpose. Respondents searching for political information as entertainment is in line with a study regarding the motive of young people in using media to find political information. The motives for connecting with online political media included for supervision, entertainment, guidance, and social benefits (Azis et al., 2020). The use of social media, which is inseparable from the popular culture in the public, also affects its use as a means to find political information, since social media can be used for information dissemination, socialization, self-expression, and entertainment (Ropingi el Ishaq, 2018).

Menggunakan atau mengakses informasi/berita politik dari berbagai sumber informasi tersebut untuk kebutuhan membuat konten terkait informasi/berita politik
112 responses

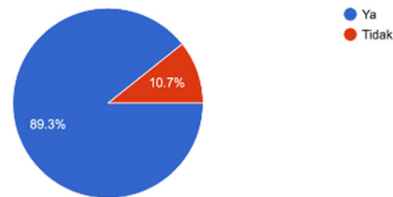


Source: Research Finding

Fig. 16. Accessing Political Information for Making Content

Based on the result, majority of respondents did not access political information to make contents pertaining to political information or news (69.6%). 30.4% respondents claimed that they made content regarding political information based on the result of their accessing political news. In its development, social media became a vessel for political information and encourage democratic and participative political discourses (Azis et al., 2020). Political awareness and bonds can be improved through the use of social media as a source of information using various features that allow users to give direct responses and critiques to political institution or figures. In addition, social media allow their users to express themselves in an effort to modify political messages (Ropingi el Ishaq, 2018).

Melakukan seleksi atas informasi atau berita politik yang diperoleh dari sumber atau media
112 responses

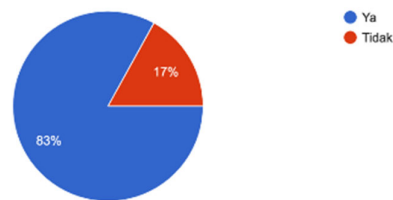


Source: Research Finding

Fig. 17. Selecting Political Information

Based on the result, respondents selected political information they obtained from various sources. 89.3% of respondents stated so, while 10.7% did not. The responses indicated that majority of respondents went through a selection process to find their political information from social media. Such process is important because of the open nature of information in social media. The easy access of social media has created a phenomenon of cyber selfishness which users should be concerned about. Cyber selfishness refers to people who show no accountability when using social media to disseminate information. The phenomenon allows for the spread of lies and false information online, both for the interest of certain parties and for deceiving the public. Therefore, digital literacy is very crucial in political education (Indrawan & Ilmar, 2018).

Melakukan verifikasi pesan/informasi politik yang diperoleh dari sumber atau media
112 responses



Source: Research Finding

Fig. 18. Verifying Political Information or Messages

Based on the finding, respondents verified political messages and information they got from various sources and media. As shown by the questionnaire, 83% respondents claimed they verified the information and 17% did not verify political information they obtained from various media. In verifying political messages from social media, there are several categories that indicate public verification capability. Firstly, personal competency, i.e. when the individual users can distinguish misinformation from facts. Secondly, social competency, in which society is able to implement digital literacy and create contents in social media for other users and able to build relations with other community groups through the disseminated political content (Wahyuti, 2019).

4 Conclusion

Public participation can be measured from their assessment of democracy practices and access to political information. Assessment or perception of democracy practice, i.e. the implementation of general election based on the direct, public, free, honest, and confidential principles, assessment of credibility of governmental institutions, community organizations, political parties, and government policies could not be said to score high in this study. It is evident in the average score of 5 out of 10 for responses on each democracy practice. Public perception of democracy practices needs to be improved. For instance, in general election which is an indicator of democracy practice in a nation. Public trust depends greatly on the credibility displayed by institutions and political figures. Credibility can be improved through objectivity, sincerity, and fairness values shown in political activities. Particular attention should also be given to the low level of public trust toward democracy practices since it will affect governmental practices, especially in formulating and implementing policies. Therefore, responsive steps are needed from various government institutions, community organizations, and political institutions to ensure the fulfilment of public rights.

Public perception is inseparable from their access to political information, which is done through social media. Accessing political information is done to satisfy the need for information, not to distribute or disseminate political information. Even though some respondents did disseminate political messages, most respondents accessed political news to get information. Considering the wide reach of social media, it should be optimized as a political communication channel. It can be used as a channel or platform that the public can use to criticize government institutions, as an implementation of control or supervision for democracy practices. Digital literacy should be improved to reduce the effects of political misinformation. Social media should also be used to disseminate political messages before the campaign, during the campaign, and after the campaign, i.e. when the candidate has won. This optimizes the educational function of social media as well as shaping public opinion towards supporting certain policies.

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