

Social Media and Political Participation of Young Voters in the 2024 Presidential Election

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Abstract. Social media has become an integral aspect of the daily lives of Generation Z and millennials, particularly as young voters. This article investigates the interaction dynamics on social media that influence the extent of political engagement, especially among young individuals. Such insights are often referenced for responses and participation in the 2024 presidential election. This study adopts a qualitative methodology, utilizing secondary data sourced from mainstream media and social media. During the 2024 presidential election, it was evident that social media played a crucial role in political campaigns, particularly in reaching out to young voters. This is largely because the majority of internet users in Indonesia belong to the millennial and Generation Z demographics. Utilizing both social media and television can enhance political campaign strategies, but it is imperative to implement regulations to mitigate the spread of negative content. Moreover, there should be adjustments in voter political engagement by providing more opportunities for the younger generation. Participation venues, once characterized by formality and structure through forums and similar platforms, now require a more casual and egalitarian approach.

Keywords: Social Media, Political Participation, Young Voters

1 Introduction

Voter participation is an important aspect of democracy [1]. In a democratic system, individuals possess the authority to select their representatives via transparent and equitable elections. A fundamental aspect of democracy lies in the periodic rotation of leadership achieved through direct electoral processes.[2]. In Indonesia, general elections are conducted to choose the President, Vice President, members of the People's Representative Council, members of the Regional Representative Council, members of the Provincial and Regency/City DPRD, Governors, Regents, and Mayors. Active citizen engagement in each electoral process is crucial for upholding the integrity of democracy. It is imperative for the government and election authorities to promote both the quantity and quality of voter participation[3]. Enhancing the quality of participation involves eliminating vote-buying, enhancing campaign standards, combating misinformation, and enforcing laws against criminal activities and infractions throughout the electoral cycle. Increased engagement in the electoral process correlates with a reduced likelihood of violations. Individuals retain the right to report any irregularities perpetrated by electoral participants, a measure that can mitigate the risk of fraud during elections[4].

Over the past six elections, including Presidential and Vice Presidential elections as well as regional head elections, data from the KPU indicates a consistent rise in voter turnout. The 2019 Presidential and Vice Presidential elections marked the highest participation rate at 81.9 percent, a notable increase from the 69.6 percent recorded in the 2014 Presidential and Vice Presidential elections. Likewise, in regional head elections, voter turnout during the 2020 regional elections stood at 76.9 percent, marking an increase from the figures observed in regional elections in 2015 (70 percent), 2017 (74 percent), and 2018 (73.2 percent). The surge in participation during the 2020 regional elections, despite being conducted amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, addressed concerns from various quarters and demonstrated the community's enthusiastic engagement.

Referring to KPU RI data, the following is the composition of the 2024 Election DPT in terms of age: Age 40 years and over: 98,448,775 voters (48.07%) Age 31-40 years: 42,398,719 voters (20.70%) Age 17-30 years: 63,953,031 (31.23%). The KPU also presents data on the composition of voters for the 2024 election by generation as follows:

- a. Pre-Boomers (born before 1945): 1.74%
- b. Baby Boomers (born 1946-1964): 13.73%
- c. Gen X (born 1965-1980): 28.07%
- d. Millennials (born 1981-1996): 33.6%
- e. Gen Z (born 1997 and later): 22.85%

Based on the provided data, it is evident that the count of young voters aged 17 to 26 years (Generation Z) has surpassed 46 million. Within this demographic bracket, the pool of first-time voters in the 2024 election is anticipated to be substantial, particularly among citizens aged 17 to 21 years[5]. "Novice Voter" refers to individuals participating in general elections for the first time or exercising their voting rights in elections, as outlined in the Voter Education Manual published by the KPU Top of Form[6], According to the General Elections Commission's definition, first-time voters are citizens who reach voting age and are poised to exercise their voting rights for the first time in an election. As per Law number 7 of 2017 concerning Elections, Article 198 paragraph 1, Indonesian citizens who are at least 17 years old on polling day or have been married hold the right to participate in general elections.

Research examining the impact of social media on the voting preferences of novice voters yields varied results. For instance, a study conducted in Kota Padang concluded that the use of social media had no significant effect on the voting behavior of first-time voters.[7]. On the contrary, alternative research suggests that social media platforms can facilitate enhanced voter engagement, offering avenues for information dissemination, fostering increased participation, and serving as a platform for first-time voters to articulate their views and construct their identities[8][9]. Moreover, social media is recognized as a platform that fosters a public sphere, enabling individuals to actively engage in political participation and discourse [10]. Hence, the exploration of social media's influence on first-time voter engagement remains a compelling and evolving area of research.

2 Literature Review

The theory of political participation encompasses the actions undertaken by individuals or groups to actively engage in political processes. It delineates two main forms: conventional and non-conventional political participation. Conventional political participation entails activities such as holding political or administrative positions, as well as running for political

or administrative offices, Conventional political participation encompasses active membership in organizations, both political and quasi-political, as well as passive affiliation with such groups, along with participation in rallies, demonstrations, and the electoral process. Non-conventional political participation, on the other hand, involves activities conducted outside formal political structures, such as protests, strikes, and other forms of radical action[11][12]. Political participation theory is important in the context of research on public participation in presidential elections.

Rafael Raga Maran [13] In his book titled "Introduction to Political Sociology: A Theoretical and Practical Approach," the author delves into the intricacies of political participation. He elucidates the concept and evolution of political socialization, explores the various forms and scope of political engagement, and delves into the underlying motivations driving political participation. Political participation, as depicted, embodies the active involvement of individuals or collectives in the realm of political affairs. Varieties of political participation encompass holding political positions, active involvement in organizational memberships, participation in rallies, demonstrations, and exercising the right to vote. This notion holds significant importance within the realms of political sociology and political science, representing a foundational topic warranting diligent study.

Arnstein participation ladder (1969) is a conceptual framework delineating the extent of community involvement in decision-making processes. This participation ladder comprises eight levels, categorized into three main groups: non-participation, tokenism, and community empowerment. Non-participation encompasses manipulation and therapy, whereas pseudo-involvement comprises information, consultation, and placation. Community power, on the other hand, comprises partnership, delegated power, and citizen control[14]. This concept aids in gauging the degree of public engagement in decision-making processes and holds relevance in research on public participation, including within the context of presidential elections.

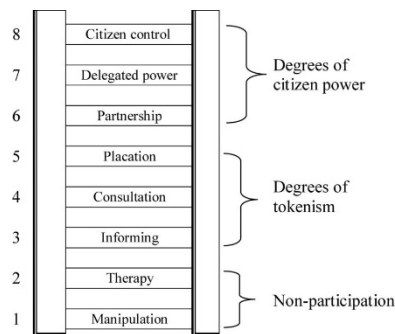


Fig. 1. Arnstein Participation Ladder

Research on the impact of social media on first-time voter engagement yields varied outcomes. While some studies reveal that the overall political participation level of first-time voters in major Indonesian cities (such as Jakarta, Bandung, Surabaya, and Yogyakarta) remains relatively low in the realm of social media, they do highlight emerging patterns of interaction.[15]–[17]. The research findings indicate promising signs of participatory politics among first-time voters in major Indonesian cities, including within Yogyakarta Province. This study seeks to delve into the political engagement of the younger generation, particularly those in the Gen-Z age bracket, amidst the backdrop of polarized opinions and growing public support that tends to foster disunity within an unhealthy political environment. Based on the three research findings presented, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- a. Overall, political engagement among the younger generation remains relatively low.
- b. However, the younger generation demonstrates participatory political behaviors, particularly within the online sphere.

3 Method

A qualitative methodology employing secondary data analysis can be employed in researching first-time voters and their engagement with social media. Secondary data, a form of research information gathered indirectly, encompasses sources such as literature reviews, media analyses, and observational data [18]. Data collection techniques used in qualitative research include interviews, observation, and content analysis [20]. This study relied on secondary data sourced from documents and expert opinions typically disseminated through mainstream media and social media platforms.

4 Result and discussion

4.1 Modification of Young Voter Participation in the Age of Social Media

The population of first-time voters presents an intriguing subject for comprehensive study. Born without deep-seated emotional attachments to past political events, this generation has cultivated independent political perspectives. Their distinct advantage lies in being a reactive cohort, readily absorbing information from various sources due to technological advancements, and striving to adapt to the dynamic nature of contemporary times. Thus, the factor of information acquisition becomes a defining characteristic among millennials, as ownership of information can significantly influence their level of engagement in public spheres. Consequently, it is imperative to adapt voter political participation strategies by accommodating the needs and preferences of Generation Z. Previously, participation spaces leaned towards formality and structure, often through forums and similar avenues. However, there is now a shift towards more casual and egalitarian approaches. Anis Baswedan exemplifies this shift with his leadership style, which prioritizes providing broader participation opportunities for Generation Z with a specific agenda „desak anis and tabrak Mahfud“. The utilization of digital technology for sharing ideas and concepts is widely embraced across all social media platforms. For instance, individuals can freely express and contribute their thoughts and suggestions regarding proposed programs, allowing internet users to actively participate in shaping the vision and mission being communicated.

“Desak Anies dan tabrak prof“ (Urge Anies and hit the prof) are campaign, spearheaded by Anies Baswedan and Mahfud MD during the presidential election, represents a notable phenomenon characterized by its intelligent approach, emphasizing substantive ideas over mere visual spectacles. This campaign strategy entails engaging in discussions and dialogues with first-time voters across different regions of Indonesia. Anies' resolute stance and Mahfud's advocacy have given rise to a new phenomenon in the realm of intelligent campaigning.

4.2 Protecting the Digital Realm Amidst Election Campaigns

According to search data, the most popular social media platforms utilized in the 2024 Presidential Election campaign in Indonesia are Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok. An article highlights that Instagram is widely used by 86.5% of the population, followed by Facebook with 83.8%, and TikTok with 70.8% of the population. Furthermore, social media is deemed to play a crucial role in political campaigns, particularly in targeting young voters. This is particularly pertinent as the majority of internet users in Indonesia belong to the millennial and Generation Z demographics. Projections suggest that by 2024, these cohorts are anticipated to comprise 40% to 50% of the total voter population.[21]. Therefore, these social media platforms are considered as potential campaign platforms to reach a wide range of voters, especially the younger generation.

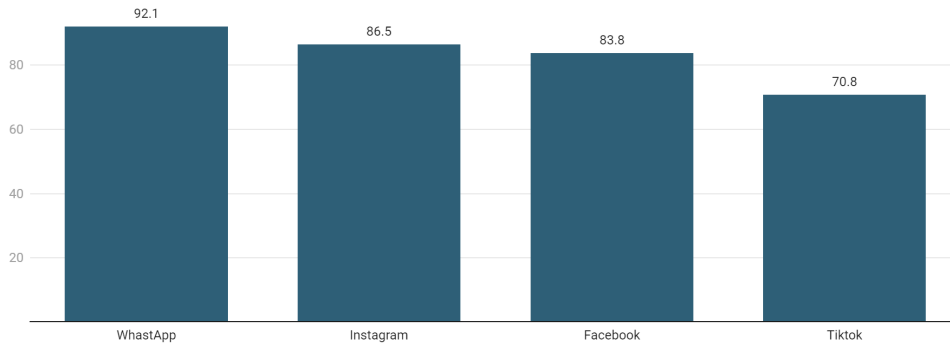


Fig. 2. Social Media Platforms (% of Population in Indonesia)

Such significant potential necessitates regulations aimed at minimizing the dissemination of content containing black campaigns or identity politics, while also contributing to the development of national politics throughout the 2024 election process. The trend of utilizing social media for campaigning is expected to surge across the three major stages of the 2024 election: pre-election, election day proceedings, and post-election periods. This trend will likely manifest in terms of both quantity and diversity of content.

5 Conclusion

There are several conclusions regarding social media and political participation of young voters in the 2024 Presidential Election:

- a. Social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok play a pivotal role in political campaigns, particularly in engaging young voters. Given that the majority of internet users in Indonesia belong to the millennial and Generation Z demographics, these platforms serve as effective channels for reaching them.
- b. Leveraging both social media and television can augment political campaign strategies; however, it is essential to implement regulations aimed at minimizing the dissemination of negative content and fostering the development of national politics throughout the 2024 election process.

- c. There is a necessity for a revision in voter political engagement by allocating more space to the younger generation. Participation venues, once predominantly formal and structured, often through forums and similar platforms, now demand a more relaxed and egalitarian approach.

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