# Digital Political Education Falls Short Improving Content for Early Voters

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# Digital Political Education Falls Short: Improving Content for Early Voters

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**Abstract.** This research explores the use of social media platforms as a means of political education for early voters. The aim is to identify the form and content of digital media platforms that can raise awareness and promote citizenry. The research methodology is qualitative, using Participatory Action Research (PAR), which includes in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, observations, and document analysis. The study finds that the existing digital content of political education focuses more on voter education rather than political education. As a result, the design of political education content needs improvement to develop political content. The research has implications for the design of digital platforms for political education, especially for early voters who cannot separate their daily lives from internet-connected devices.

**Keywords:** Social media · Political education · Early voters · Digital platforms · Citizenry

## 1 Introduction

Political education has been obtained in a family environment, though not directly. The children will see how the decision-making process occurs concerning the family's interests. How the family's head makes decisions, who is involved, and how the family accepts differences of opinion. These activities will be ingrained in children's minds from childhood.

When boosting early voters' political participation during general elections, it is necessary to maximize their role. They are not only voters but also participants in election processes such as voting committees (PPS) from the lowest level to the sub-district, election monitors, democracy volunteers, and others. The presence of ample space for new voters to participate will be meaningless if they continue to have limitations in understanding politics.

In this context, involving early voters in conducting general elections must be followed by political education. Political education should differ from voter education because early voters' political education is still limited. Voter education is more than just a focus on the technical aspects of general election administration. Meanwhile, political education will help to shape a citizen's mindset framework.

Political education in the information age cannot rely again on traditional methods such as print, television, and radio media, as well as new media (online media), outdoor media, pamphlet distribution, or face-to-face meetings. However, we must begin utilizing digital media platforms such as Twitter, Tik Tok, Facebook, Youtube, Instagram, and others.

The use of social media in political activities is not new, as it is widely used in several countries and is crucial in attracting large numbers of voters. Political figures now use social media to interact with their netizens. Examples are Twitter accounts such as https://twitter.com/jokowi, https://twitter.com/prabowo, and https://twitter.com/mohmahfudmd. World political figures who use Twitter to express themselves include Barack Obama at https://twitter.com/BarackObama and Donald Trumps at https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrumps. Other digital media platforms used by these figures include Instagram, Facebook, and others. Therefore, social media is part of the political strategy of the world's political elites and those from political parties.

The effectiveness of this new cyberspace space is more valuable in the context of early voter political education. Political participation will improve with adequate political education. Even if new voters participate in political debates in cyberspace or other political activities, they will become active political participants.

Formal institutions that want to reach out to new voters to encourage political participation use social media extensively. Almost all political parties, as well as the General Election Commission (KPU), have social media accounts with a diversity of contents. However, given that novice political participation remains around 70–80 percent, increasing the use of social media needs is a must.

Many factors contribute to ineffective social media use. One of them is that the content is still top-down, preventing the messages from arriving. Early voters are still excluded from determining the content of the political education they desire. This study will look into the political content that early voters want.

## 2   Literature Review

Political education is a political learning process that encourages community participation by developing political awareness and intelligent political behavior. Political education is referred to as a critical pillar for the long-term viability of society and the political system, both of which are under threat. On the other hand, the state is also interested in political education. With political education, the next generation will be prepared as recipients and successors of the value system (political system, belief pattern, and cultural system). Moreover, it can equalize the thinking system of values that can guide the activities of state life, strengthen the soul's attitude in implementing the value system, and build a desire to preserve the system of values. Political education is a long-term process that we cannot complete overnight.

It frequently implies that because early voters lack political background knowledge, they are a group of voters who are still susceptible to political persuasion. According to Almond and Verba [1] the beginner political orientation is divided into three categories: (1) cognitive orientation, which includes the knowledge of and trust in candidates, (2) affective political orientation, which includes feelings about general elections and the

influence of friends on making choices, and (3) evaluative political orientation, which include novice voters' decisions and opinions about political parties/candidates of their choice. The political orientation of these novice voters is always dynamic and will change according to the existing conditions and the factors that influence them.

Because the character of early voters is frequently said to be still unstable, they become the target of all the groups that will fight in political contestation. Setiajid [2] defines novice voters as follows: (1) have never voted or voted in a polling station, (2) have no voting experience, (3) have high enthusiasm, (4) are less rational, (5) young voters who are still full of turmoil and enthusiasm, which if not controlled will have an effect on social conflicts in general elections, (6) become targeted by election participants due to the large number, and (7) have curiosity, trying, and participating in elections, although sometimes with a variety of different backgrounds.

Many studies on social media and political education have been conducted. Siregar [3] conducted a study on the use of social media by early voters in political participation during the 2019 presidential election in Medan finding that social media has play a significant role in politics, gaining people's attention through campaigns, educating the younger generation about politics, and increasing the participation of new voters. As a result, anyone entering the world of politics must be familiar with and skilled in the use of social media.

Juwandi, Nurwahid, and Lestari [4] conducted a study to identify the social media networks of early voters on social media and their influence on political participation. His research results suggest that social media has been used as massively as possible by early voters. Through social media, they can interact and communicate without the need for physical preparation or the necessity to show personality attributes openly.

Khalyub, Bangu, Ardiyansyah, and Romadhona [5] findings that regarding the campaign of the candidate's spouse via narrative conversations on social media during the 2020 Depok Mayoral Election campaign stages. Social Network Analysis (SNA) is used to obtain the narrative of campaign issues on social media, particularly on Facebook and Twitter. According to the research findings, each candidate's spouse has different preferences for campaign issues when using social media. Although the candidate's spouse has a dominant campaign issue and a high level of digital participation, this is not always a deciding factor.

## 3  Methodology

It is a qualitative study based on Peter Reason's Participatory Action Research (PAR). Participatory Action Research (PAR) is a participatory research method that emphasizes the subjects studied carrying out, producing, and taking actions aimed at empowering and illuminating them through the assistance and involvement of researchers in social production processes. The goal participatory action research is twofold: a) it generates knowledge and actions that are directly useful to the community through research, adult education, and socio-political action; and b) empowers participants by constructing their knowledge and skills. It is known as the self-awareness process through collective self-inquiry and reflection.

## 4 Results

Politics remains static in the minds of early voters and appears to flow naturally with society as its object. Despite being exposed to a large amount of political information through various media channels, both mainstream and social media, the primary sources of political information for early voters are family, school, social media, and mainstream media (print, electronic and online media). A study on early voters in the Special Region of Yogyakarta showed it. However, civic organizations and political parties have not been the primary sources of information. So, political information obtained from these sources will be discussed further in the family, or if the space is limited, at school with peers.

Various efforts are made to intervene, so early voters look for social media owned by institutions having the authority to do so, such as political parties and General Election Commission (KPU). However, it has not been able to entice new voters to visit or follow it.

Based on the Table 1, it appears that the social media owned by institutions expected to provide political information to early voters cannot meet our expectations optimally. Moreover, there are numerous differences when compared to individual-owned accounts. There are multiple causal factors, ranging from appearance to talent used to play a role in social media. Many continue to use the institutions' employees. It is not incorrect. However, early voters may not be aware of them.

Another factor is that the content is still presented from the top down. The institutions building the social media do not attempt to discover what the netizens or audiences of social media want. Early voters are a dynamic generation that will not limit their information search to a single media outlet.

This study attempts to reveal early voters' opinions on several aspects, including (1) their political understanding, (2) their understanding of rights and obligations, (3) their understanding of general elections, (4) their understanding of political parties, and (5) their expectation of political content. The researchers develop each of them around a series of open-ended questions. Because there are similarities in how these issues are understood, the researchers divide them into several categories that cover the main matters that early voters present.

The political content of early voters must be educative and persuasive with the support of images and videos. Firstly, the content should motivate the importance of politics. Secondly, the content should educate the public to become good Indonesian citizens who participate in advancing democracy. Thirdly, the content shows the advantages and disadvantages if you are not participating in the general elections.

Political education through social media must be provided by influencers and can include original examples. Given that the majority of users of social media follow their idols/influencers, the talents used have a good reputation.

By changing the personality of communicators on social media, political content should encourage interesting voter participation. Active social media users are generation X, millennials, and generation Z, so to be conveyed and get attention from the public, the packaging of political content presented must adjust the current character so that it can get attention without becoming saturated.

**Table 1.** Social Media with Political Education Content

| No | Name of Social Media | Subcribers /followers |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Politician Academy https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCmp98BEPcNa4F_ot8jlWfGA | 23 ribu Subscribers |
| 2 | InstitutIndonesia- https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCmIn-iBRxT2FraPGGIgmLZg | 142 Subscribers |
| 3 | Pusdeppol https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCwAgyUZswCddIqfQ8PMl3dQ | 138 Subscribers |
| 4 | http://www.instagram.com/bawaslu_ntb/ | 2.712 Followers |
| 5 | http://www.instagram.com/bawaslu_kota bekasi | 457 Followers |
| 6 | http://www.instagram.com/bawaslu.luwu | 5.652 Followers |
| 7 | http://www.instagram.com/kpumanggarai barat | 1.040 Followers |
| 8 | http://www.instagram.com/bawaslukabup atenbekasi | 1.971 Followers |
| 9 | http://www.instagram.com/kpuklaten | 3.712 Followers |
| 10 | 1 Komite Independen Sadar Pemilu (Independent Committee on Election Awareness - Millennial-driven election community) - http://www.twitter.com/kisp_id/ | 378 Followers |
| 11 | Regional Leadership Council of Nasdem Party - http://www.tiktok.com/@nasdem.bdg | 15,4ribu Followers dan 232,5ribu Likes |
| 12 | http://www.tiktok.com/@kpu_ri/ | 2.771 Followers dan 12,1ribu Likes |
| 13 | http://www.tiktok.com/@lathifaanshori | 18,3ribu Followers dan 212,5ribu Likes |
| 14 | http://www.tiktok.com/@kpuprovjabar | 283 Followers dan 3.819 Likes |

Source: *Processed from secondary data 2022*

The intended audience must understand the political content to be presented. As a result, approaches should meet the audience's age or background. The persuasive ones still implicitly become more effective than threats or labeling of those who are still hesitant to participate. One example is the characterization of those who refuse to vote in general elections as apathy. Some people decide not to vote because of the labeling and judgemental attitude.

Education about politics is needed because some people are not interested in politics due to their mindset that politics is cunning. So, the content presented can be about community needs which every prospective leader should consider.

Content about the importance of community participation in exercising their voting rights aims to make people understand that the community contributes to the quality of democracy. We should strictly prohibit unwilling voters (Golput) and providing invitations in the form of foodstuffs, clothing, funds, or infrastructure improvements to the local community.

If political figures are featured on social media, it relates to their vision, mission, goals, thoughts, opinions, and insights on current issues. Political content that encourages voter participation can include topics such as the importance of voting, the consequences of unwilling voters (*golput*), and others.

## 5    Conclusion

Creating social media content can critically captures the aspirations of the target audience or citizens. This determination is crucial so that the content meets the expectations of the intended audience. Early voters are a generation that is open to new experiences. The content you upload must be educational, comprehensive, and in-depth.

After presenting the research results above, institutions having social media should pay attention to the description above. Therefore, if the institutions are to design political education content, the institutions must pay attention to (1) the target audience (netizens) (2) it is necessary to group content based on specific issues or themes. For example, discussing unwilling voters (*golput*), this discussion must be comprehensive. It should not just give specific labeling. (3) the electoral mechanism should also be thoroughly discussed (4) discussing public issues that arouse the motivation of early voters to participate.

The use of talent must take into account their social and political activities. As a result, we should consider looking at the number of followers and their activities in political life. If displaying the ranks of the institutions that create the content, we should know whether the figures are well-known among netizens or not.

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