Youth Engagement in Politics: Exploring the Role of Information and Personal Motivation

Hasbullah Azis[1], Hari Wiryawan[2]
hasbullah.azis@usahidsolo.ac.id
Universitas Sahid Surakarta, Central Java, Indonesia

ABSTRACT

The growing interest of young people in political issues has emerged as a significant focus in contemporary democratic discourse, particularly within the context of the digital era. Various discussions surrounding youth political engagement continue to generate compelling debates, underscoring the importance of understanding the extent of young people's interest in politics and the factors that shape it. This study explores the relationship between political information motivation and political participation among youth, with a particular emphasis on their involvement during the 2024 presidential election. As a crucial demographic group in shaping democratic processes, young individuals increasingly turn to digital platforms—primarily social media—to access diverse political information. Drawing upon the Uses and Gratification Theory and the Self-Determination Theory, this research examines the underlying factors that motivate youth to engage in political affairs. Employing a qualitative survey method with open-ended questions, the study involved 65 university students. The analysis reveals that young people are driven to access political information on social media by a range of motivations, including surveillance (the desire to stay informed about current political events), guidance (to understand political issues), entertainment (seeking entertainment in political issues), social utility (to support peer discussions and align with social conversations). Furthermore, the study finds that youth participation in electoral processes is primarily motivated by a sense of civic responsibility and a belief in the value of their contributions as young citizens— reflecting a form of self-determined political engagement. These findings highlight the importance of recognizing motivational and self-efficacy factors in fostering active, voluntary, and meaningful youth participation within Indonesia's democratic landscape.

Keyword: digital politic, youth political participation, uses and gratification, self-determination

ABSTRAK

Ketertarikan anak muda dengan isu politik telah menjadi perhatian penting dalam demokrasi kontemporer, khususnya dalam konteks era digital. Berbagai wacana mengenai keterlibatan anak muda dalam politik selalu menjadi diskusi dan perdebatan yang menarik sehingga penting untuk mengetahui sejauh mana minat anak muda terhadap politik dan factor-faktor yang membentuknya. Studi ini mengeksplorasi hubungan antara motivasi informasi politik dan partisipasi politik di kalangan anak muda, dengan fokus pada keterlibatan mereka selama pemilihan presiden 2024. Sebagai kelompok demografi penting dalam membentuk proses demokrasi, kaum muda semakin beralih ke platform digital—khususnya media sosial—untuk mendapatkan berbagai informasi mengenai politik. Mengacu pada Teori *Uses and Gratification* dan Teori *Self-Determination*, penelitian ini menyelidiki faktor-faktor yang mendorong anak muda untuk terlibat dalam urusan politik. Studi ini menggunakan metode survei kualitatif dengan pertanyaan terbuka, yang melibatkan 65 mahasiswa. Dari analisis yang dilakukan, studi ini menunjukkan bahwa kaum muda mengakses informasi politik di media sosial didorong oleh berbagai motivasi seperti motivasi pengawasan (ingin mendapatkan informasi tentang berbagai peristiwa politik terkini), panduan (untuk memahami persoalan politik), hiburan (mencari hiburan dalam isu politik), dan motivasi utilitas sosial (untuk modal dalam diskusi dan menyesuaikan diri dengan obrolan rekan sejawat). Selain itu, studi ini menemukan bahwa keikutsertaan anak muda dalam proses elektoral didorong oleh rasa tanggung jawab sipil dan keyakinan akan nilai kontribusi diri mereka sebagai anak muda—yang mencerminkan bentuk keterlibatan politik yang ditentukan diri sendiri. Hasil ini menunjukkan

pentingnya memahami faktor motivasi dan kepercayaan diri individu dalam mendorong partisipasi pemuda yang aktif, sukarela, dan bermanfaat dalam lanskap demokrasi Indonesia..

Kata Kunci: *politik digital, partisipasi politik anak muda, uses and gratification, self-determination*

Introduction

In recent years, the political engagement of young people has become an increasingly important subject of study, particularly in the context of rapid technological advancement and changing patterns of media consumption. It is characterized as a group that exhibits enthusiasm for the presence of digital media, yet demonstrates limited interest and participation in political affairs [1], displaying apathy and, in some cases, withdrawal from political matters [2], Young people today have access to an unprecedented amount of political information, largely due to the widespread use of the internet and social media platforms. This digital space not only broadens the range of political news sources but also transforms how young individuals receive, interpret, and engage with political content, thereby giving rise to novel forms of alternative political actions [3].

In the digital age, the way young people engage with political information has undergone a significant transformation. Globally, youth are increasingly turning to online platforms—especially social media—for news, produce and distribute political content, memes and humor, and civic engagement [4]. This shift has redefined the nature of political participation, moving beyond traditional forms such as voting or party membership to include activities like online petitions, digital activism, and the creation and sharing of political content. As digital natives, today's youth are not just passive recipients of political information; many are active

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[1] Hasbullah Azis, Pawito Pawito, and Agung Satyawan, "Motif Penggunaan Media Informasi Politik Oleh Anak Muda Tionghoa Di Media Sosial," *ETTISAL : Journal of Communication* 5, no. 1 (2020): 1–16, https://doi.org/10.21111/ejoc.v5i1.3886.

[2] Matt Henn and Nick Foard, "Social Differentiation in Young People's Political Participation: The Impact of Social and Educational Factors on Youth Political Engagement in Britain," *Journal of Youth Studies* 17, no. 3 (2014): 360–80, https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2013.830704; Tom P. Bakker and Claes H. de Vreese, "Good News for the Future? Young People, Internet Use, and Political Participation," *Communication Research* 38, no. 4 (2011), https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650210381738.

[3] Ana Pontes, Matt Henn, and Mark Griffiths, "Towards a Conceptualization of Young People's Political Engagement: A Qualitative Focus Group Study," *Societies* 8, no. 1 (2018): 17, https://doi.org/10.3390/soc8010017; Hasbullah Azis, Pawito, and Agung Satyawan, "Examining Communication Mediation Model on Chinese on Youth Online Political Engagement," *Profetik Jurnal Komunikasi* 13, no. 2 (2020): 340–55, http://ejournal.uin-suka.ac.id/isoshum/profetik/article/view/1841; UNDESA, "Youth, Political Participation And Decision-Making," *United Nations Youth*, no. June (2015).

[4] Bakker and de Vreese, "Good News for the Future? Young People, Internet Use, and Political Participation," 465; Philip N. Howard and Malcolm R. Parks, "Social Media and Political Change: Capacity, Constraint, and Consequence," *Journal of Communication*, 2012, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2012.01626.x; Indra Lestari, Iriyani Astuti Arief, and Muh.Djufri Rachim, "PARTISIPASI POLITIK GENERASI Z PADA NEW MEDIA MENJELANG PEMILIHAN GUBERNUR SULAWESI TENGGARA 2024," *Journal Publicuho* 7, no. 4 (December 29, 2024): 2297–2308, https://doi.org/10.35817/publicuho.v7i4.600.

participants in shaping political discourse in the digital public sphere [5]. This shift marks a transformation in how political awareness is developed and how civic engagement unfolds. From following political influencers on TikTok to debating on X (Twitter), young people today are engaging with politics in ways that are often creative, informal, spontaneous, and shaped by digital culture [6].

Indonesia, as one of the world's largest democracies with a young and digitally connected population, offers a unique context to understand these changing patterns. With more than half of its population under the age of 30 and over 80% internet penetration, Indonesian youth are among the most active internet and social media users in Southeast Asia. According to data from the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII), more than 80% of the population is online, with youth aged 16–30 being the most active demographic [7]. Platforms like Instagram, Twitter (now X), TikTok, and YouTube have become key spaces where young Indonesians encounter and discuss political issues—from presidential elections and policy debates to social justice movements and grassroots campaign [8].

However, this fragmented media environment raises important questions about how and why young people choose to consume political information. Their news media choices are not driven solely by a desire to stay informed but may include social exchange, entertainment, form and express self-identity, or access the profile of political candidate [9]. However, the motivations that drive young people to use social media for political information—and to participate in electoral processes—are diverse and not yet fully understood.

In examining individuals' motivations for media use, scholars in the field of media propose the application of the Uses and Gratification (U&G) theory as a

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[5] Ana Laura Maltos-Tamez, Francisco Javier Martínez-Garza, and Oscar Mario Miranda-Villanueva, "Digital Media and University Political Practices in the Public Sphere," *Comunicar* 29, no. 69 (2021), https://doi.org/10.3916/C69-2021-04; Dagmar Hoffmann, "The Socialization Relevance of Digital Media Practices in Adolescence in Times of Polycrisis," *Zeitschrift Für Bildungsforschung* 15, no. 1 (April 9, 2025): 21–32, https://doi.org/10.1007/s35834-024-00456-3.

[6] Alexander; Cho, Jasmina; Byrne, and Pelter Zoe, "Digital Civic Engagement by Young People," *UNICEF Office of Global Insight and Policy*, 2020; Tomaž Deželan, "Young People's Participation in European Democratic Processes. How to Improve and Facilitate Youth Involvement," 2023, 19.

[7] APJII, "Survei Penetrasi Internet Indonesia 2024," *Asosiasi Penyelenggara Jasa Internet Indonesia (APJII)* (Jakarta, 2024), https://survei.apjii.or.id/survei/group/9.

[8] Rachmah Ida, "Social Media Brings Young Indonesians in from Political Fringe," 360Info, 2023, https://360info.org/social-media-brings-young-indonesians-in-from-political-fringe/; Deni Zein Tarsidi et al., "Social Media Usage and Civic Engagement among Indonesian Digital Natives: An Analysis," *Jurnal Civics: Media Kajian Kewarganegaraan* 20, no. 2 (2023), https://doi.org/10.21831/jc.v20i2.60812; Frans Ari Prasetyo, "Youth, YouTube, and Protest in the Indonesia Darurat Movement," mediacommons.og, 2025, https://mediacommons.org/imr/content/youth-youtube-and-protest-indonesia-darurat-movement.

[9] Raffael Heiss, Johannes Knoll, and Jörg Matthes, "Pathways to Political (Dis-)Engagement: Motivations behind Social Media Use and the Role of Incidental and Intentional Exposure Modes in Adolescents' Political Engagement," *Communications* 45, no. S1 (2020), https://doi.org/10.1515/commun-2019-2054; Ngozi Joy Onyechi, "Taking Their Destiny in Their Hands: Social Media, Youth Participation and the 2015 Political Campaigns in Nigeria," *African Journalism Studies* 39, no. 1 (2018): 79, https://doi.org/10.1080/23743670.2018.1434998.

valuable framework. This theory provides insight into why individuals engage with media or adopt emerging information and communication technologies. Users actively engage in the communication process and employ a variety of media to attain specific objectives and fulfill their expectations [10]. In the context of political information, UGT offers a pertinent perspective for exploring the motivations that drive individuals, particularly youth, to utilize social media as a source of political information. The theory emphasizes that media users are active agents who deliberately seek content to fulfill specific needs, such as acquiring information, engaging in social interaction, seeking entertainment, or constructing their identities [11].

While digital platforms may inform and influence political attitudes, the decision to vote or participate in elections is shaped by more complex psychological and social factors. This is where the concept of Political Self-Determination becomes relevant. Political self-determination refers to an individual's belief in their capacity and right to influence political outcomes, express civic identity, and make autonomous decisions as part of a democratic society. In Indonesia's political landscape, where trust in institutions and political efficacy varies across regions and social groups, understanding how youth perceive their political agency is essential.

Likewise, their motivations to vote or participate in elections may be influenced by a range of factors including peer influence, personal values, or exposure to political content online. Understanding the motivations behind youth news media use is critical for evaluating their role in sustaining democratic dialogue and informed citizenship.

The urgency of this research stems from the widening gap between Indonesian youths' active digital presence and their limited formal political engagement—an issue that holds serious implications for the vitality of democratic processes. Recent studies have found that while youth are prolific users of social media, their engagement is often driven more by identity expression,

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[10] Moses Sichach, "Uses and Gratifications Theory - Background, History and Limitations," *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 2024, 2, https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4729248; Elihu Katz, Jay G. Blumer, and Michael Gurevitch, "Utilization of Mass Communication by the Individual," in *The Uses of Mass Communications: Current Perspectives on Gratifications Research*, ed. Jay G. Blumer and Elihu Katz, 2nd ed. (California: SAGE Publication, Inc., 1974), 21.

[11] Kavita Sharma and Devinder Pal Singh, "Motivations for Youths' Political Participation on Social Media: Implications for Political Marketers," *International Journal of Indian Culture and Business Management* 1, no. 1 (2020), https://doi.org/10.1504/ijicbm.2020.10028537; Azis, Pawito, and Satyawan, "Examining Communication Mediation Model on Chinese on Youth Online Political Engagement"; Nor Hafizah Abdullah, Tuan Sharifah Azura Tuan Zaki, and Muhamad Fazil Ahmad, "Shaping the Future: Social Media's Role in Youth Political Information and Engagement - A Review of Literature," *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences* 14, no. 12 (December 6, 2024), https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v14-i12/23955.

entertainment, or social connectivity than by a commitment to civic duty [12]. This research presents a novel contribution by combining the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) with the concept of Political Self-Determination to explore how these motivations shape political behavior in digital spaces—an integrative approach that is still limited in the Indonesian context. By situating the study within Indonesia's rapidly evolving media ecosystem, this research responds directly to the need for context-specific, interdisciplinary insights into how youth form political attitudes and make decisions in a highly mediatized democracy.

Therefore, this research seeks to explore two interrelated aspects of youth political participation in the digital era:

(1) the motivations behind young people's use of social media to access political information, and

(2) the factors that influence their desire to participate in electoral processes, particularly in the Indonesian context.

By examining these motivations, this study aims to elucidate the psychological factors that affect youth engagement with political news and content on social media, as well as their participation in the 2024 Indonesian Election. The findings are anticipated to offer a comprehensive understanding that can inform government efforts in developing effective political education strategies tailored to young people, ensuring that this demographic is neither overlooked nor marginalized within the dynamics of formal political processes.

Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative approach within the interpretivist paradigm to examine how young people in Indonesia utilize social media for political news and the factors that motivate their participation in electoral processes. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research is exploratory and seeks to investigate a problem most effectively examined through an in-depth exploration of a specific concept or lived experience [13]. The design of this research aims to capture the rich, subjective experiences of youth in the context of digital political engagement during the 2024 general election. The research is exploratory and descriptive, intending to generate insights rather than test hypotheses or produce statistical generalizations.

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[12] Fiona Suwana, "What Motivates Digital Activism? The Case of the Save KPK Movement in Indonesia," *Information, Communication & Society* 23, no. 9 (July 28, 2020): 1295–1310, https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2018.1563205; Loso Judijanto et al., "Pengaruh Politik Identitas Dan Penggunaan Media Sosial Terhadap Partisipasi Politik Digital Pemilih Milenial Dan Gen Z Di Indonesia," *Sanskara Ilmu Sosial Dan Humaniora* 2, no. 01 (December 31, 2024): 24–35, https://doi.org/10.58812/sish.v2i01.500.

[13] John W. Creswell and J. David Creswell, *Research Design Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 5th ed. (California: SAGE Publication, Inc., 2018).

This study employed an open-ended qualitative survey to examine how individuals engage with political content on social media and how this relates to their political interests and voting intentions. The use of open-ended questions allowed participants to provide detailed, personal responses, resulting in rich textual data. Compared to traditional interviews, this approach enabled broader participation while still capturing individual experiences and insights.

The survey focused on two central themes:

1. Participants' motivations for using social media to access political information;
2. The factors that influence their interest in politics and their intention to vote.

The survey was administered online through Google Forms, making it accessible to a wide audience and allowing for efficient distribution and data collection.

The participants in this study were young individuals selected through purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling method used to ensure that respondents possessed relevant knowledge and experience related to the research focus and the research question. Specifically, the sample comprised first-time and young voters and well educated who actively use social media platforms. Participants were chosen based on predefined criteria aligned with the study's objectives, allowing the researcher to make informed, purposeful selections. The targeted demographic included college students aged 20 to 25, representing a group considered both politically emergent and digitally engaged.

The data collected were analyzed using thematic analysis, a widely used method in qualitative research for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns of meaning within textual data [14]. The analytical process followed several key steps: organizing and preparing the data, thoroughly reading all responses to gain familiarity, generating initial codes, constructing themes and categories, and interpreting the findings within a theoretical framework.

To guide the interpretation of the data, this study employed a dual-theoretical lens: Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) and Self-Determination Theory (SDT). UGT provided insight into participants' motivations for engaging with political content on social media, while SDT offered a deeper understanding of the psychological needs. Together, these frameworks facilitated a more nuanced interpretation of how young people's media use is shaped by both external motivations and internal psychological drivers in the context of digital political participation.

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[14] J W Creswell and Cherly N. Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*, 4th ed. (SAGE Publication, Inc., 2018).

Result and discussion

This section presents and interprets the findings of the study using the lenses of Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT) and Self-Determination Theory (SDT), highlighting how young people in Indonesia engage with political content on social media and what motivates their participation in the 2024 electoral process.

The survey results indicate that, in the context of the 2024 election, young people increasingly rely on social media platforms—particularly Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter/X as primary sources of political news and updates. Among these, Instagram emerged as the most frequently accessed platform for political
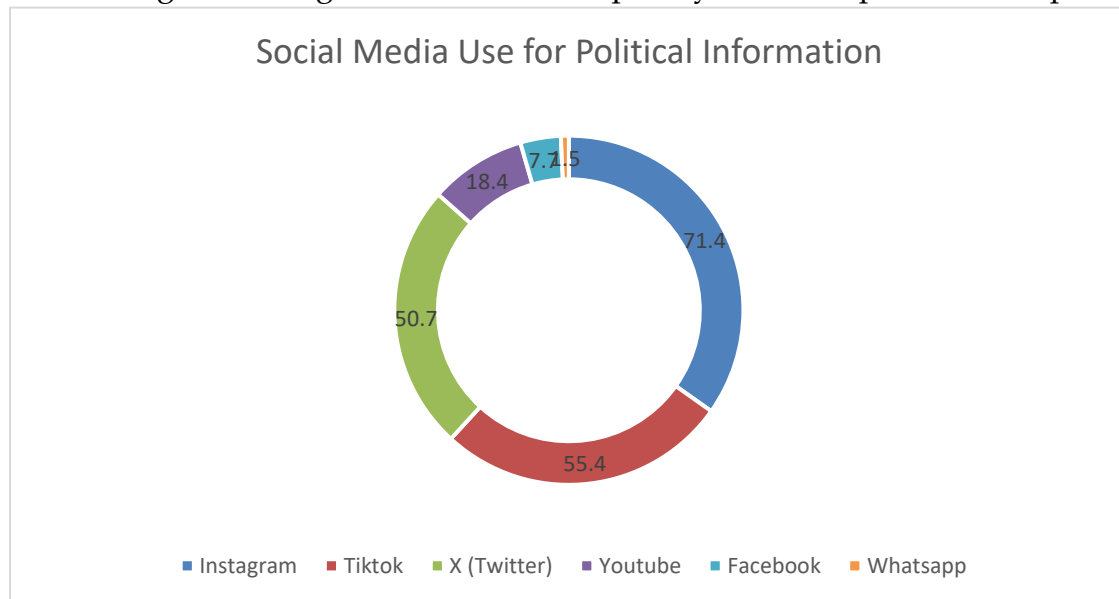

Figure 1. Social Media News Use

content. This finding aligns with recent studies that highlight the growing role of visual and interactive platforms in shaping youth political engagement [15]. Instagram's algorithmic feed, use of stories and reels, and high level of user engagement make it particularly effective for disseminating political messages in ways that are easily consumable and emotionally resonant for younger audiences.

1.1 Youth Motivation for Social Media News Use

This study reveals that Indonesian youth engage with political content on social media for four primary motivations: surveillance, guidance, entertainment, and social utility. These motivations reflect the broader framework of Uses and Gratification Theory, which posits that media audiences actively seek content that fulfills specific psychological and social needs.

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[15] Shelley Boulianne and Christian P. Hoffmann, "The Social, Civic, and Political Uses of Instagram in Four Countries," *Journal of Quantitative Description: Digital Media* 2 (2022), https://doi.org/10.51685/jqd.2022.001; Martino Trevisan et al., "Towards Understanding Political Interactions on Instagram," in *HT 2019 - Proceedings of the 30th ACM Conference on Hypertext and Social Media*, 2019, https://doi.org/10.1145/3342220.3343657.

The first motivation for young people to access political information on social media is surveillance motivation (information seeking). This is reflected in their efforts to remain updated on current political issues, developments related to the election agenda, and practical information concerning voting procedures. Social media provides a space for young people to monitor the political landscape to understand the main issues and events of each day. It serves as a primary source where political readers are interested in finding political news or information that is being widely discussed today [16].

"I want to get the latest info about politics. Observe what issues are currently being hotly discussed/trending topics by the digital community"

"I want to stay up to date with the latest political news"

With regard to political guidance, the findings of this study align with those of Gil de Zúñiga, Jung, and Valenzuela (2012), who observed that young people increasingly rely on digital media not only to access news but also to receive interpretive cues that assist in making electoral decisions [17]. This trend highlights the evolving function of social media as an informal yet influential educational resource, shaping political understanding and decision-making among young voters in the digital age.

"I want to have knowledge about politics so that it helps me to be an informed voter "

"to find out what the track records and policies are of the candidates (presidential and vice presidential) that I will choose "

Entertainment also emerged as a notable motivation for political news consumption among young people. Consistent with prior research, this study found that entertainment-oriented content can serve as a gateway to political engagement. Participants reported being drawn into political discussions through humorous, emotionally resonant, or satirical formats— such as memes, humorous comments, and humorous content about politics—which initially attract attention but often lead to deeper interest in political issues.

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[16] Daekyung Kim and Thomas J. Johnson, "Political Blog Readers: Predictors of Motivations for Accessing Political Blogs," *Telematics and Informatics* 29, no. 1 (2012), https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tele.2011.04.003.
[17] Homero Gil de Zúñiga, Nakwon Jung, and Sebastián Valenzuela, "Social Media Use for News and Individuals' Social Capital, Civic Engagement and Political Participation," *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 17, no. 3 (April 2012): 319–36, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2012.01574.x.

"Entertain myself by watching funny political content "

"Reading funny netizen comments and content that each one is promoting their chosen candidate "

Rather than reducing the significance of political discourse, political entertainment content can play a substantive role in political socialization. This is consistent with the findings of Karlis (2013), who asserts that youth are motivated to engage with current events on social media not solely for informational purposes, but also for the entertainment and enjoyment provided by these platforms [18]. The entertainment value associated with social media makes news consumption more accessible, engaging, and interactive for this demographic. In this regard, entertainment functions not merely as a diversion, but as a mechanism that stimulates critical reflection, fosters discussion, and enhances youth participation in political matters.

Framing this within the Uses and Gratifications Theory, the appeal of entertainment-based political content reflects young users' desire to fulfill both informational and affective needs. UGT suggests that audiences actively select media that satisfy specific psychological gratifications, including the need for enjoyment, emotional connection, and cognitive stimulation [19]. In this study, the integration of humor and emotion into political content enabled youth not only to access information in a more engaging format, but also to sustain interest in topics that might otherwise seem inaccessible or overwhelming.

Another significant motivation for the use of political news on social media is social utility, wherein young individuals engage with political content to participate in discussions. This finding is consistent with previous research, which suggests that social media offers a platform for civic engagement and public discourse through its participatory and conversational nature [20]. The study indicated that young Indonesians utilize social media to project their political identities and connect with peer groups.

"I want to be involved in political discussions "

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[18] John Vincent Karlis, "THAT'S NEWS TO ME: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE USES AND GRATIFICATIONS OF CURRENT EVENTS ON SOCIAL MEDIA OF 18-24 YEAR-OLDS" (University of South Carolina, 2013), https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/etd/2347/.

[19] Katz, Blumer, and Gurevitch, "Utilization of Mass Communication by the Individual."

[20] Chandralekha JS, "Social Media, Civic Engagement and Public Spheres," *International Journal For Multidisciplinary Research* 5, no. 4 (2023), https://doi.org/10.36948/ijfmr.2023.v05i04.4929.

"I want to increase my knowledge (about politics) so that I can interact in class forums"

"I want to increase my (political) knowledge and participate in political discussions with people who have the same or different (political) views as me"

Furthermore, social utility is closely intertwined with the concept of social capital, which refers to the networks, relationships, and resources individuals can access through their social connections. Collins et al. (2014) emphasize the pivotal role of social capital in fostering collective efficacy, a process that drives community engagement and enhances civic participation [21]. In this context, social media platforms provide an essential space for youth to develop and strengthen their social networks, form connections with like-minded individuals, and amplify their influence within their communities. These platforms not only facilitate political engagement but also function as crucial resources for accumulating social capital, thereby underscoring the interconnectedness of political participation and social interaction in the process of social capital development.

1.2 Youth Motivations for Electoral Participation

In relation to electoral participation, the study finds that youth are motivated by a **sense of civic responsibility** and a belief that their involvement can contribute to national progress. This aligns with Self-Determination Theory, which states that intrinsic motivation is driven by the satisfaction of three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Autonomy refers to the ability to act according to one's own will and choices without external pressure. Competence means feeling capable and effective in completing tasks. Relatedness is the need to feel connected and accepted by others [22]. In the context of youth political engagement, autonomy is reflected in young people's strong desire to freely express and exercise their political rights. They value having the freedom to form their own political opinions and make independent voting decisions. Competence relates to their efficacy and preparedness to participate in democratic processes, such as understanding political issues and feeling capable of contributing meaningfully. Relatedness involves the sense of belonging to a larger community, which motivates

[21] Charles R. Collins, Jennifer Watling Neal, and Zachary P. Neal, "Transforming Individual Civic Engagement into Community Collective Efficacy: The Role of Bonding Social Capital," *American Journal of Community Psychology* 54, no. 3–4 (2014), https://doi.org/10.1007/s10464-014-9675-x.

[22] Mika Manninen et al., "Self-Determination Theory Based Instructional Interventions and Motivational Regulations in Organized Physical Activity: A Systematic Review and Multivariate Meta-Analysis," *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 2022, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2022.102248; Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan, "The 'What' and 'Why' of Goal Pursuits: Human Needs and the Self-Determination of Behavior," *Psychological Inquiry* 11, no. 4 (2000), https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327965PLI1104_01; Richard M. Ryan and Edward L. Deci, *Self-Determination Theory: Basic Physhological Needs in Motivation, Development, and Wellness* (New York: The Guildford Press, 2017).

them to take part in political activities like voting and discussing political matters. Together, these three needs help explain why young people become intrinsically motivated to engage in politics.

Respondents in this study expressed a strong sense of autonomy in choosing their political affiliations and candidates, echoing findings from some research that self-efficacy is one of the key factor in youth participation [23]. Moreover, access to political information through social media enhanced their competence.

"I decided not to abstain from voting because young people (like me) are a generation that can contribute to policy regulation through the democratic party "

"I believe that voting rights are an effective way to contribute to shaping the future of the country"

"I feel it is important to continue my involvement in the democratic process to voice our aspirations as citizens "

The integration of findings reveals a clear relationship between youth media habits and political self-determination. Social media not only informs but empowers young people to participate, reinforcing their identity as active citizens. Motivations rooted in entertainment or peer interaction can lead to deeper forms of engagement, including voting.

These findings suggest that youth political engagement in the digital era is shaped by an interplay between media motivations and psychological needs. While social media serves as a tool for informing and entertaining, it also reinforces youth political agency and helps nurture a sense of belonging in democratic life. In contrast to the narrative of youth apathy, this study supports a more optimistic view of digital citizenship, where political participation is motivated not only by duty but also by identity, curiosity, and a desire for meaningful impact.

Conclusion

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[23] Azis, Pawito, and Satyawan, "Examining Communication Mediation Model on Chinese on Youth Online Political Engagement"; Warhi Pandapotan Rambe et al., "Pilkada During a Pandemic: The Influence of News Media on Trust and Political Participation Amid the COVID-19 Pandemic," *Proceedings Of International Conference On Communication Science* 2, no. 1 (2022), https://doi.org/10.29303/iccsproceeding.v2i1.119; Hasbullah Azis, "Pemilihan Di Masa Krisis: Refleksi Dampak Media Pemberitaan Terhadap Kepercayaan Dan Partisipasi Politik Di Tengah Krisis Kesehatan Covid-19," *Harmoni: Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi Dan Sosial* 2, no. 2 (April 3, 2024): 42–59, https://doi.org/10.59581/harmoni-widyakarya.v2i2.2889; Byongsam Jung, "Factors Affecting Korean Youth s Political Efficacy and Political Participation," *Korea Association for Public Value* 2 (2021), https://doi.org/10.53581/jopv.2021.2.1.23; Brett L.M. Levy and Thomas Akiva, "Motivating Political Participation Among Youth: An Analysis of Factors Related to Adolescents' Political Engagement," *Political Psychology* 40, no. 5 (2019), https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12578.

This study has explored the motivations of Indonesian youth in using social media for political news and their engagement in the 2024 electoral process. Drawing on Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT) and Self-Determination Theory (SDT), the research highlights that youth are not passive recipients of information, but active participants who seek out political content on social media to satisfy specific needs. These include the desire for surveillance (to stay informed), guidance (to make decisions), entertainment (to enjoy and relate), and social utility (to connect and express). In parallel, the study found that youth participation in electoral processes is significantly motivated by a sense of civic responsibility, a belief in the value of their political contribution, and the fulfillment of autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

The findings challenge the stereotype of political disengagement among young people, particularly in Indonesia. Rather than being apathetic, youth today are deeply embedded in digital political culture, where media content, civic identity, and personal values intersect. Their political involvement is shaped not only by the content they consume but also by the ways in which digital media allow them to interpret, share, and act upon that content. This has significant implications for how we understand youth civic engagement in a post-digital world.

Theoretically, the study reinforces the relevance of UGT and SDT as complementary lenses for analyzing media behavior and political action. UGT explains the functional motivations for media use, while SDT offers a psychological understanding of why young people choose to participate in democratic processes. Together, they provide a holistic framework for examining how internal drives and external media environments interact to shape youth political participation.

Suggestions

This research utilized Uses and Gratification Theory and Self-Determination Theory, other theoretical frameworks could further illuminate the complex relationships between media use, political identity, and civic behavior—such as the Civic Voluntarism Model or Networked Public Sphere Theory. Exploring how different media platforms (e.g., TikTok vs. YouTube vs. Twitter/X) uniquely shape political participation could also enrich future research.

In terms of direction, future research may explore how algorithmic filtering, misinformation, or digital activism trends impact youth political attitudes and behaviors over time. Longitudinal studies that track political engagement across multiple elections could provide a clearer picture of how media habits evolve and influence democratic participation among the youth.

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Biografi Singkat Penulis

Hasbullah Azis, S.I.Kom, M.I.Kom

Dosen Ilmu Komunikasi dengan pengalaman profesional di industri media penyiaran. Memiliki latar belakang akademik Magister Ilmu Komunikasi, saat ini penulis aktif

mengajar di Prodi Ilmu Komunikasi Universitas Sahid Surakarta sembari disibukkan dengan meneliti dan mempublikasikan karya ilmiah di bidang komunikasi politik, media siber, dan jurnalisme. Memiliki komitmen tinggi dalam mengembangkan pembelajaran berbasis riset dan teknologi komunikasi untuk menciptakan proses belajar yang inklusif dan adaptif terhadap perkembangan media digital.

Hari Wiryawan, SH, MA

Dosen Ilmu Komunikasi dengan pengalaman professional di media penyiaran. Selain aktif dalam melaksanaka Tri Dharma Pendidikan di Universitas Sahid Surakarta, penulis juga

aktif sebagai penulis lepas dengan fokus tema politik, sejarah, hukum, dan media.