

Sociology of Young Voters: How They Shape Political Campaigns in Indonesia

A. Sulastri¹, Bambang Tri Sasongko Adi^{2*}, Oman Sukmana³, Wahyudi³

^{1,2}Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Sociology, University of Muhammadiyah Malang, Malang, Indonesia

^{3,4}Professor, Department of Sociology, University of Muhammadiyah Malang, Malang, Indonesia

Abstract: This article explores the impact of young voters, particularly Millennials and Generation Z, on political campaigns in Indonesia. It examines how these digital natives influence political strategies, identifies key issues driving their engagement, and contrasts their behaviors with older generations. Using qualitative analysis and theories like Generation Theory and Social Identity Theory, the study leverages data from voter surveys and scholarly articles. Findings show that young voters' reliance on social media platforms compels political parties to prioritize digital strategies. Their preference for integrity and principled leadership necessitates campaigns emphasizing transparency and policy solutions. Concerns such as poverty, health insurance, employment, climate change, and corruption drive their engagement. The shift towards online activism and issue-based campaigns requires political parties to adapt their strategies to effectively engage this influential demographic, reshaping Indonesia's political landscape.

Keywords: young voters, democracy, politics, millennial, generation.

1. Introduction

A. Background

The political landscape in Indonesia is undergoing a significant transformation, driven largely by the burgeoning influence of youth voters. In the 2024 general elections, the sheer number of young voters underscored their pivotal role in shaping political campaigns and outcomes. Millennials, accounting for 66,822,389 voters, represented 33.60% of the electorate, while Generation Z, with 46,800,161 voters, made up 22.85% of the total voters. Combined, these two generational cohorts contributed to over 113 million voters, marking a profound demographic shift in the Indonesian electorate [5], [10].

This youth vote revolution signifies more than just numbers; it reflects a shift in political priorities and values. Young voters in Indonesia are not merely passive participants but are increasingly active and engaged, demanding accountability, transparency, and policies that resonate with their aspirations and challenges. The vision and mission of political parties and candidates have become crucial determinants for the majority of these young voters, as highlighted by Abdullah et al. (2019). This indicates a more issue-driven and less ideologically rigid voter base, contrasting with previous generations where loyalty

to political parties or figures might have been more pronounced.

The significance of youth voting behavior in contemporary Indonesian politics cannot be overstated. This demographic's preferences and priorities are reshaping political strategies, campaign narratives, and policy proposals. Political parties and candidates are compelled to adapt to the changing dynamics, focusing on issues that matter most to young voters, such as education, employment, digital innovation, and environmental sustainability. The increasing political engagement of young voters is fostering a more dynamic and participatory democratic process, highlighting the critical role of this demographic in the political future of Indonesia.

B. Problem Statement

Despite the growing influence of young voters in Indonesia, there is a lack of comprehensive understanding of how their voting behavior and preferences specifically impact political campaigns and election outcomes. The challenge lies in identifying the key factors that motivate young voters and how political actors can effectively engage with this demographic. This gap in understanding presents a significant problem for political strategists and policymakers aiming to address the needs and expectations of this influential voter base.

C. Objectives

The primary objective of this article is to explore the multifaceted impact of youth voters on political campaigns in Indonesia. It seeks to answer key questions such as: How do young voters influence the strategies of political parties and candidates? What are the primary issues driving the political engagement of millennials and Generation Z? How do the voting patterns and behaviors of young voters differ from those of older generations? By examining these questions, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the evolving political landscape in Indonesia and the transformative power of its young electorate.

Through an analysis of recent election data, voter surveys, and case studies, this article delves into the core aspects of youth voting behavior. It highlights the trends, motivations, and implications of the youth vote revolution, offering insights into how this demographic is shaping the future of Indonesian politics. The findings of this study contribute to the broader

*Corresponding author: bambangtsa@hatfieldgroup.com

discourse on democratic participation and the role of youth in political processes, both in Indonesia and globally.

2. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative analysis approach [14], [18], utilizing secondary data from previous studies to examine the impact of youth voters on political campaigns in Indonesia. The research leverages data from voter surveys, election results, and scholarly articles to understand the preferences and behaviors of millennial and Generation Z voters. Two key sociological-political theories are applied: Generation Theory [13] and Social Identity Theory [19], [20]. Generation Theory [13] helps to contextualize the unique characteristics and values of these age cohorts, while Social Identity Theory, developed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner, provides insight into how young voters derive their sense of identity and self-esteem from their membership in social groups, such as youth organizations. These theoretical frameworks guide the analysis, offering a comprehensive understanding of the motivations and influences driving young voters in Indonesia.

3. Theoretical Foundation

A. Social Identity Theory

Social Identity Theory, developed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner [19], [20], posits that individuals derive a sense of identity and self-esteem from their membership in social groups. This theory emphasizes the importance of group membership in shaping an individual's self-concept and behavior. According to Tajfel and Turner, individuals strive to maintain a positive social identity by affiliating with groups that enhance their self-esteem. This affiliation often leads to in-group favoritism and out-group discrimination, as people seek to elevate the status of their own group while diminishing the status of others.

In the context of youth voting behavior in Indonesia, Social Identity Theory is used to analyze how young voters identify with certain political parties, candidates, or social movements. For example, youth who strongly identify with environmental activism may be more inclined to support candidates or parties that prioritize sustainability and climate change policies [8]. This group identity influences their voting behavior and political engagement, as they align themselves with movements that reflect their values and aspirations. The theory helps explain why young voters might exhibit strong loyalty to political groups that resonate with their social identity, leading to increased political participation and advocacy [23].

B. Generation Theory

Generation Theory, often associated with Karl Mannheim [13], posits that each generation develops distinct values, attitudes, and behaviors based on the unique historical and social contexts they experience during their formative years. Mannheim argued that these generational experiences create a collective consciousness among individuals born within the same time frame, leading to shared perspectives and behaviors that differentiate them from other generations.

This theory is particularly useful in exploring how the unique experiences of Indonesian youth shape their voting behavior and political engagement. For instance, millennials and Generation Z in Indonesia have grown up in an era marked by rapid technological advancements, economic fluctuations, and significant political changes. These experiences have influenced their expectations and priorities, such as a strong emphasis on digital connectivity, economic opportunities, and political transparency. Generation Theory helps to contextualize why these cohorts may prioritize issues like digital innovation, job creation, and anti-corruption measures in their voting decisions. The distinct generational values and attitudes shaped by their formative experiences are crucial in understanding the political dynamics and preferences of young Indonesian voters.

By applying Social Identity Theory and Generation Theory, this study provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing the complex interplay between group identity, generational experiences [3], and youth voting behavior in Indonesia. These theoretical foundations offer valuable insights into the motivations and influences driving young voters, ultimately contributing to a deeper understanding of their impact on the political landscape.

C. Overview of Young Voters Behaviour

The analysis of recent research reveals a positive trend in the political engagement and perception of young voters in Indonesia, aligning well with both Social Identity Theory and Generation Theory. [11] Found that a significant majority of young voters exhibited a positive perception of the 2024 election, actively engaging in voter registration and expressing a strong intention to vote. This active participation and favorable political orientation, including a rejection of negative campaigning, suggest that young voters derive a sense of identity and self-esteem from their political involvement, consistent with Social Identity Theory. Their group identity as politically active youth reinforces their commitment to democratic processes and ethical political behavior [1], [16].

Additionally, [4] highlighted the critical role of political education in shaping the political attitudes and behaviors of young voters. This finding supports Generation Theory by emphasizing the importance of formative experiences—such as political education programs—in developing the distinct values and attitudes of millennials and Generation Z. Young voters' belief in the effectiveness of political education reflects their desire for informed and rational participation in the democratic process [6], which is further evidenced by [1]. Their study demonstrated that young voters prioritize the vision and mission of political parties and candidates, as well as the candidates' experience and performance. This rational approach to political decision-making aligns with the generational emphasis on transparency, accountability, and substantive policy issues.

Together, these studies underscore the dynamic interplay between social identity and generational experiences in shaping the political behavior of Indonesian youth. Young voters' critical and informed engagement, driven by their group

identity and formative experiences, is reshaping political campaigns and reinforcing democratic values in Indonesia [1], [16].

4. Results

A. Profile of Young Voters

Data on young voters were obtained from two institutions, i.e., CSIS and the Indonesian Institute, based on their surveys conducted in 2022 [5], [10], [21], [22]. A summary of the young voter's profile is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1
Profile of young voters (2022)

No.	Parameter	Results	%
1.	Age range	20-25 yr	53%
2.	Educational	High School	51%
3.	Occupation	Student	51%
4.	Domicile	Java	55%
5.	Religion	Islam	85%
6.	Rural/Urban	Urban	57%

Source: [5], [10], [21], [22]

The demographic profile of young voters aged 20-25 years, which comprises 53% of the electorate, presents a significant opportunity for political parties to tailor their campaign strategies effectively. Given that this age group represents more than half of the young voter population, parties should prioritize addressing issues pertinent to early adulthood. Key concerns include employment opportunities, higher education, and affordable housing. Policies that facilitate the transition from education to the workforce and provide support for first-time job seekers are likely to resonate well with this demographic, fostering a sense of security and optimism for their future.

In terms of educational attainment, 51% of young voters have completed high school. This slight majority suggests that political parties should focus on policies that cater to high school graduates. Initiatives could include expanding vocational training programs, apprenticeships, and pathways to higher education. By emphasizing the improvement of public education and job training, parties can appeal to voters who are eager to enhance their skills and secure better job opportunities.

Occupation data reveals that 51% of young voters are students, highlighting the importance of issues related to education funding, student loans, scholarships, and the quality of educational institutions. Political campaigns could benefit from focusing on creating internship opportunities and bridging the gap between education and employment. By addressing the financial and academic concerns, parties can demonstrate their commitment to supporting the academic and professional aspirations of young people [9], [23].

Geographically, 55% of young voters reside in Java, indicating that political strategies should be tailored to the unique socio-economic conditions of this region. This includes prioritizing infrastructure development, urban planning, and addressing local economic issues. By understanding and responding to regional concerns and priorities, parties can effectively engage with voters in Java, ensuring their policies are relevant and impactful in this densely populated and

economically significant area. Religion also plays a crucial role, with 85% of young voters identifying as Muslim. Political parties should ensure that their policies and messaging are culturally sensitive and resonate with Islamic values. This might include focusing on social justice, equitable economic policies, and respect for religious practices. By aligning their platforms with the values and beliefs of Muslim voters, parties can foster trust and support within this significant demographic.

Finally, the urban-rural divide shows that 57% of young voters live in urban areas. This highlights the need for political parties to address urban issues, including urban development, public transportation, housing, and pollution. By focusing on the challenges of urban living, such as affordable housing and quality public services, parties can appeal to the majority of young voters who are navigating the complexities of urban environments.

In summary, the profile of young voters suggests that political parties should develop campaign strategies that address employment and education opportunities, support for students [9], [23], regional socio-economic conditions, culturally sensitive policies, and urban development [4]. By aligning their platforms with the specific needs and concerns of this diverse demographic, parties can effectively engage with young voters and build a strong voter base.

B. Interest and participation of young voters

Summary of young voters interest is presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2
Interest and participation of young voters (2022)

No.	Parameters	Results	%
1.	Participate in election	Yes	91.3%
2.	Involvement in political party	No	98%
3.	Responded on political issues (via social media, publication, donation to party)	No	96%
4.	Source of information on election	Social media	89%

Source: [5], [10], [21], [22]

The table presents findings on the interest and participation of young voters in Indonesia, based on surveys conducted by the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) from August 8-13, 2022. The survey encompassed 1,192 validated respondents across 34 provinces.

A substantial majority of young voters, at 91.3%, reported participating in elections, indicating a high level of electoral engagement among this demographic. However, their involvement in political parties is notably low, with 98% of respondents stating they are not involved in any political party. Similarly, 96% of the respondents indicated they do not respond to political issues through social media, publications, or donations to political parties, suggesting a limited engagement in political activities beyond voting. Regarding their sources of information on elections, a significant 89% of young voters rely on social media and the Internet [9]. This highlights the critical role of digital platforms in shaping the political knowledge and awareness of young voters in Indonesia [1], [16].

These findings underscore a trend where young voters are

actively participating in the electoral process but are less engaged in other forms of political involvement. The reliance on digital media for election information also points to the importance of these platforms in reaching and informing the youth demographic [12].

C. Preference of Young Voters on National Leaders

Table 3 illustrates the evolving preferences of young voters in Indonesia regarding the qualities they desire in national leaders, comparing data from 2019 and 2022, as gathered by the CSIS.

In 2019, the most valued quality in a national leader among young voters was popularity, with 39.2% expressing this preference. This was followed by firmness (16.5%), innovation (15.2%), cleanliness (integrity) at 11.1%, experience (8.7%), and religiousness (3.0%). By 2022, there was a significant shift in the preferences. The importance of a leader being popular dropped sharply to 15.9%. Cleanliness, or integrity, became the most preferred quality, with 34.8% of young voters prioritizing it. Experience also saw a notable increase in importance, rising to 16.8%. The preference for firmness slightly decreased to 12.4%, and innovation also saw a decline to 11.6%. The value placed on religiousness remained low but increased marginally to 4.1%.

These shifts indicate a growing emphasis on integrity and experience among young voters, reflecting a desire for more trustworthy and competent leadership [2], [8]. The decreased importance of popularity suggests that young voters may be looking beyond charisma and public appeal, favoring more substantive qualities in their national leaders [2].

D. Preference on the Social Media Platform

Table 4 presents the preferences of young voters regarding social media platforms, comparing data from 2019 and 2022. In 2019, Facebook was the most widely used platform among young voters, with a usage rate of 93.1%. WhatsApp followed at 91.6%, and Instagram was 67.5%. YouTube had a significant user base of 56.3%, while Twitter was used by 21.3%. TikTok did not have significant usage among young voters in 2019. By 2022, there were notable changes in platform preferences. WhatsApp became the most used platform, with its usage increasing to 98.3%. Facebook, while still popular, saw a decline to 84.8%. YouTube usage rose significantly to 74.9%, reflecting its growing importance as a source of information and entertainment. Instagram usage also increased to 74.5%. TikTok, which was not previously significant, emerged strongly with 56% usage, indicating its rapid rise in popularity among young voters. Twitter saw a slight increase in usage to 24.8%.

These trends suggest a dynamic shift in social media preferences among young voters in Indonesia [12], [17], with newer platforms like TikTok gaining substantial traction, while traditional platforms like Facebook see a relative decline.

E. Perception of Social Issues

Table 5 provides insights into the perceptions of young voters in Indonesia on various social issues. A majority of young voters, 56.6%, agree that high poverty is a significant issue.

This indicates a widespread recognition of poverty as a critical social concern among the youth [8].

Regarding health insurance, 85.2% of young voters believe it is the government's responsibility to provide health insurance. This highlights a strong expectation for government intervention and support in healthcare. In terms of handling the COVID-19 pandemic, 73.8% of young voters are satisfied with the government's response. This suggests a relatively positive perception of the government's efforts in managing the pandemic. Work opportunities are seen as challenging, with 91% of respondents indicating that finding work is difficult. This underscores the significant concern about employment prospects among young voters. Social impact from climate change is considered an urgent issue by 76.9% of young voters. This reflects a high level of awareness and concern about the environmental impacts and their societal implications [11]. Finally, when it comes to corruption eradication, 59.4% of young voters express optimism. This indicates a cautious but hopeful outlook on the government's ability to combat corruption [11].

5. Discussion

A. The Social Identity of Young Voters

The analysis of young voters' preferences and perceptions through the lens of Social Identity Theory [19], [20] provides an understanding of how these voters form their social identity and how political parties strategize the elections. Social Identity Theory, proposed by Henri Tajfel [19], [20], posits that individuals derive a significant part of their self-concept from their membership in social groups. For young voters in Indonesia, these groups could include peers, social networks, educational institutions, and digital communities. The data suggests that young voters' social identity is increasingly influenced by digital media platforms, with WhatsApp, YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok being particularly prominent.

The high level of electoral participation (91.3%) among young voters indicates a strong sense of civic duty and belonging to the national community. However, their minimal involvement in political parties (98% not involved) and limited response to political issues (96% non-responsive) suggest that their political identity is more aligned with broader civic engagement rather than specific partisan affiliations. This detachment from traditional political structures can be attributed to a distrust in political institutions or a preference for more fluid and dynamic forms of political expression, such as social media activism [9].

Political parties aiming to engage young voters must recognize these identity dynamics. Strategies should focus on digital engagement, leveraging the platforms where young voters are most active. Campaigns should prioritize transparency, integrity, and accountability, aligning with the preference for leaders who are perceived as clean and experienced. The significant shift from valuing popularity in 2019 (39.2%) to integrity in 2022 (34.8%) indicates a growing disenchantment with superficial charisma and a deeper desire for genuine, principled leadership [2].

Table 3
Young voter's preference on the leader characters (2019 and 2022)

Year	Popular	Firm	Innovative	Experienced	Clean	Religious
2019	39.2%	16.5%	15.2%	8.7%	11.1%	3.0%
2022	15.9%	12.4%	11.6%	16.8%	34.8%	4.1%

Source: [5], [10]

Table 4
Preference of young voters toward social media platforms (2019 and 2022)

Year	WhatsApp	Facebook	Youtube	Instagram	Tiktok	Twitter
2019	91.6%	93.1%	56.3%	67.5%	-	21.3%
2022	98.3%	84.8%	74.9%	74.5%	56%	24.8%

Source: [5], [10]

Table 5
Perception of young voters towards social issues

Social Issues	High Poverty	Health Insurance	Covid-19 Handling	Work Opportunity	Social Impact from Climate Change	Corruption Eradication
Perception	Agreed	Government Responsibility	Satisfied	Difficult	Urgent Issues	Optimism
Percentage	56.6%	85.2%	73.8%	91%	76.9%	59.4%

Source: [5], [10]

Furthermore, addressing the social issues that young voters care about is crucial. High poverty, health insurance, work opportunities, climate change, and corruption are significant concerns. Political parties need to develop policies that resonate with these priorities and communicate them effectively through digital media. For instance, campaigns could focus on showcasing efforts and successes in improving employment opportunities, combating corruption, and addressing climate change impacts [11].

By understanding the social identity of young voters and their reliance on digital media for information, political parties can craft messages that resonate on a personal level [12]. Engaging influencers and creating viral content can help in reaching this demographic effectively. Additionally, involving young voters in policy discussions through interactive online platforms can foster a sense of inclusion and empowerment, enhancing their political engagement [3].

In summary, applying Social Identity Theory to the data on young voters in Indonesia reveals the importance of digital engagement, integrity, and issue-based campaigning in forming effective political strategies [3]. Political parties must adapt to the evolving social identity of young voters, focusing on authenticity and responsiveness to their key concerns to win their support in elections.

B. The Future of Indonesian Political Landscape

The phenomena observed among young voters in Indonesia, comprising Millennials and Generation Z, are poised to significantly shape the future political landscape of the country [3, 4]. These generational cohorts exhibit distinct characteristics and preferences that differentiate them from older voters, influencing how political strategies and policies will need to be adapted in the coming years [3].

1) Digital Natives and Information Consumption

Millennials and Generation Z are digital natives who rely heavily on social media and the internet for information [9]. This is evidenced by the high usage rates of platforms like WhatsApp (98.3%), YouTube (74.9%), Instagram (74.5%), and the rapidly rising TikTok (56%).

These platforms serve as primary sources of news,

entertainment, and social interaction for young voters, indicating a fundamental shift from traditional media channels. This digital orientation suggests that future political campaigns will increasingly need to prioritize online engagement to effectively communicate with this demographic.

Political parties will have to invest in robust digital strategies, utilizing social media influencers, interactive content, and real-time communication to reach and engage these voters [17]. This includes creating compelling and shareable content that resonates with young voters' values and interests, and leveraging the viral nature of social media to amplify their message. Additionally, engaging with voters through live streams, interactive Q&A sessions, and other forms of direct communication can foster a sense of connection and responsiveness. By doing so, political campaigns can build trust and loyalty among young voters, who are crucial for shaping the future political landscape.

2) Civic Engagement and Political Participation

Despite their strong participation in elections (91.3%), young voters show limited involvement in political parties (98% not involved) and traditional political activities (96% non-responsive to political issues through conventional means). This indicates a preference for non-traditional forms of civic engagement, such as online activism and issue-based campaigns. Future political strategies [4], [23] will need to accommodate these preferences by providing platforms for digital engagement and facilitating grassroots movements that resonate with the values and concerns of young voters [3], [23].

3) Values and Leadership Preferences

The shift in leadership preferences from valuing popularity (39.2% in 2019) to prioritizing integrity (34.8% in 2022) reflects a deeper desire for authentic and principled leadership. Young voters are increasingly skeptical of superficial charisma and are looking for leaders who demonstrate honesty, experience, and a commitment to tackling pressing issues like poverty, employment, health insurance, and climate change [2]. This shift will likely drive political parties to emphasize transparency, ethical governance, and concrete policy solutions in their campaigns.

4) Social Issues and Policy Priorities

The significant concern among young voters regarding social issues such as high poverty (56.6%), health insurance (85.2% see it as a government responsibility), work opportunities (91% find it difficult), climate change (76.9% see it as urgent), and corruption (59.4% are optimistic about eradication) indicates that these issues will dominate the political agenda. Future political leaders will need to develop comprehensive policies that address these areas, demonstrating their ability to deliver tangible improvements in the lives of young Indonesians.

5) Shaping the Political Landscape

Millennials and Generation Z will define the future shape of Indonesian politics through their collective influence and voting power. As these generations become more politically active, their preferences and values will shape the policies and leadership styles that emerge. Political parties that fail to adapt to the evolving demands of these young voters risk becoming obsolete. The future political landscape will likely be characterized by increased digital engagement, a focus on integrity and ethical leadership, and policies that address the key concerns of social and economic justice, environmental sustainability, and effective governance [3], [4].

6. Conclusion

The study examines the significant impact of young voters, particularly Millennials and Generation Z, on political campaigns in Indonesia. These digital natives heavily rely on platforms like WhatsApp, YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok, compelling political parties to prioritize online engagement and digital strategies. Young voters' preference for integrity and principled leadership over mere popularity necessitates campaigns that emphasize transparency, ethical governance, and concrete policy solutions. Primary issues driving their engagement include poverty, health insurance, employment opportunities, climate change, and corruption eradication, reflecting a demand for comprehensive policies addressing social and economic justice, environmental sustainability, and effective governance [3].

The voting patterns and behaviors of young voters differ markedly from those of older generations. While exhibiting high electoral participation, they show minimal involvement in traditional political parties and activities, preferring non-traditional forms of civic engagement like online activism and issue-based campaigns [6]. This generational shift requires political parties to adapt their strategies to accommodate these preferences, focusing on digital engagement and grassroots movements. The evolving preferences and behaviors of Millennials and Generation Z are poised to redefine the Indonesian political landscape, emphasizing the need for responsive and dynamic political strategies that resonate with the concerns and values of young voters.

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