The Social Media and Digitalization of Political Participation in Youths: An Indonesian Perspective

Muhammad Saud [1,*] (iD), **Rachmah Ida** [2,] (iD), **Ansar Abbas** [3,] (iD), **Asia Ashfaq** [4,] (iD),
and **Araz Ramazan Ahmad** [5, 6] (iD)

[1] Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences,
Airlangga University, 60286, Surabaya, Indonesia
[2] Department of Communication Studies, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences,
Airlangga University, 60286, Surabaya, Indonesia
[3] Management Science Doctoral Study Program, Department of Management,
Faculty of Economics and Business, Airlangga University, 60285, Surabaya, Indonesia
[4] Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Bahria University, 44000, Islamabad, Pakistan
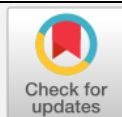[5] Department of Administration, University of Raparin, 46012, Ranya, Kurdistan Region, Iraq
[6] Department of International Relations and Diplomacy, Faculty of Administrative Sciences and
Economics, Tishk International University, 44001, Erbil, Kurdistan Region, Iraq
* Corresponding Author: rachmah.ida@fisip.unair.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

*Digitalization in the modern era has provided opportunities for
the youths to participate in this information and social spheres.
The concentrated use of social media has contributed to the
astonishing factor among the voters where social media has
changed the preferences of youths toward the right to vote. The
research aims to investigate the contributions and preferences
of youths toward political participation in the contemporary
discussion in Indonesia. This research was quantitative
research using a purposive random sampling technique to give
equal opportunity to each respondent. The mode of data
collection was an online survey. The majority of the
respondents in this research were the student of the
universities. Data were collected in April 2019 to examine the
interest of youths in general elections in Indonesia. This
research found that social media and Social Networking Sites
(SNSs) have provided a unique platform to discuss political
matters and 'take apart' in political discussions. Existing in-
depth researches on this phenomenon show that political
awareness among youths in Indonesia is an essential part and
social media is the leading indicator. This research suggested
some recommendations for to usage of social media for the*

1. Introduction

In the history of Indonesia, the students have participated in many forums to improve the status of matter toward public benefits (Altbach, 2007), which is manifested in the student movement is an activity or student activities to enhance participation and hone their intelligence in leadership. The recent demos or protests in Indonesia which are a phenomenon have taken the attention of this research.

The youths are the assets of countries; a large number of a young age may drive the dynamism needed to change the social condition of the group. Besides the opportunities for prospects and compensation that youths will have, it will be chaos when the state does not provide the best opportunities for them. Political constancy and strengthening democratic standards is in the paramount interest of the nation, and the role of the participation of the youths in this process is crucial.

Social media has changed the level of participation among voters and the public (Boulianne, 2009). People use the internet in high quantities, and thus the use of the internet as a medium can influence participation in the political process. The situation in Indonesia, the youths in cities participate in many political activities. The internet becomes the most important part of participation in student politics in demos (Woodly, 2008). Online media has many positive effects and it is easy to spread information or knowledge to others (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2010). As in Indonesia, the use of social media declared as persistent in political activism and engagement (Ida et al., 2020a).

People chose to participate in politics for many reasons. It is the best way for a citizen to participate in political participation to make a significant change in their society. The more people are engaged in politics at a national level, they may better understand the political situation of their country, and they may criticize the government wrongdoings. Therefore, citizens may cope with finding the solution to their problems if they may understand politics. However, if the citizens particularly have political understanding, then they can be a part of political action or democratic activities, then the government may realize the level of people's satisfaction among citizens. Political participation in any country will lead to strengthening the political system. If every citizen can participate, then it will become much difficult for any government to ignore their problems. Thus, the rise in engagement in political activities should understand the socio-political issues.

Thus, people often are motivated to participate in politics as they are targets of mobilization struggles by political parties and the interest groups. People use to participate politically through political socialization or have their own life experience that stimulates them to participate. There are two main factors in political activism, 1) civic participation, and 2) a sense of political efficacy (De Vreese, 2007). These two factors can encourage and influence the youths to decide whether they want to participate or not. Keeping in view the political situation in Indonesia, the participation of youths, for many reasons, contribute to the political shift of the country (Ida et al., 2020b). People may seek personal satisfaction through legislative action, as

they are willing to work with their neighbors and others in helping their communities. Voter registration is an essential factor and can impede political participation (Klemmensen et al., 2012). A general perception that youth in Indonesia is sensible about political decisions and civic involvement to change the political scenario of Indonesia, and it is a crucial feature of this research.

1.1. Online Participation and Social Media Contribution

The proliferation of digital technologies (Web 2.0) has changed the political dynamics (Spencer, 2017; Ash et al., 2018). This becomes possible due to the widespread adoption of Social Networking Sites (SNSs). Consequently, SNSs have been recognized as social change techniques that can be effectively used for political learning and voter socialization (Feenstra & Casero-Ripollés, 2014).

This research was investigated the impact of social media and its effects on political participation, as it also tried to address the political choice of the respondents. There are various arguments on social media and political debate (Theocharis, 2015). Regular participation in social media or offline or online can stress the government or state to do some actions (Verba et al., 1995).

Theocharis (2015) suggested that current political engagement analyzes must take into account digital platform affordances such as social networking sites. However, the use of social media and political participation is a mode of sharing the material to their followers, the main factor of sharing to sensitize the followers for some issues (Calenda & Meijer, 2009). This type of participation may affect political knowledge, political behavior, and, most importantly, it may encourage online participation (Bode, 2017).

1.2. Youths as a Generation for Change

Youths are key actors in most processes of economic and social change. They have their conceptions of youths, as far as can be learned from several kinds of research of this phenomenon which seems to link the transition from youths with the ability to judge, which one is wrong and which is right, and the transition from youths toward political rights.

1.3. The Concept of Youths Inn

Every year on 28th October people of Indonesia celebrate 'Youth Pledge day'. In which it recalls the importance of youths for the national stance in which they cite the contributions of youths in the independence of Indonesia. According to the statistics, around 64 million populations are youths (Yenuarizki et al., 2019). The valuable participation of youths in political matters has contributed to many political events, demos, and other historical programs, which have endorsed their position and desire their need in the political structure. The concept of Youth-Inn also supports the argument of this research where the youths are increasing to participate in campaigns, protests, elections drives, and much more (Saud et al., 2020).

1.4. The Objective of the Research

The research has the following objective:
1) To find the role of social media for promoting political engagement;
2) How the youths in Indonesia are participating in political activities in online and offline affairs.

2. Research Model

In **Figure 1** and **Figure 2**, a research model and framework have constructed to address the finding of the research. MacAfee & De Simone (2012) stated that the age factor is an important variable for online and offline participation. Age and the participation of youths in political activities have positive impacts on political participation (Wang, 2007). It is also found in the research that youths have positive effects on political participation and them more active as compared to the public (Oser et al., 2013). The social and scientific construction of youths tends to see it as a period "transition" from childhood to adulthood, from education to work, from origin family to destination family (Lloyd, 2005; Roberts, 2009). The same is true occurs with the policy literature, as in the World Bank report on Development and Future Generations which views youths in relation (World Bank, 2006). The second variable is gender preferences, and the relevant research found that engagement in political activities, men are more like to participate as compared to women (Baskaran & Hessami, 2018). The situation in Indonesia, it found that most of the Islamic boarding schools have a high number of male students, and they are active in political as well as social matters of the organizations (Nisa, 2018).
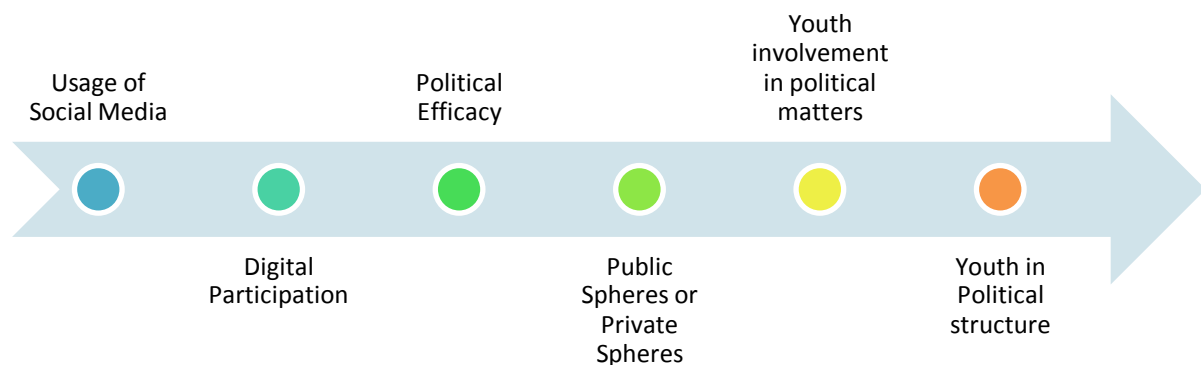

Figure 1. Research framework.

The framework of this research also illustrated that, if the usage of social media would increases, then the chance of political or digital participation can be strengthened. Thus, the engagement of youths in private (domestic) and public (society) role are important to increase their political efficacy and political learning.
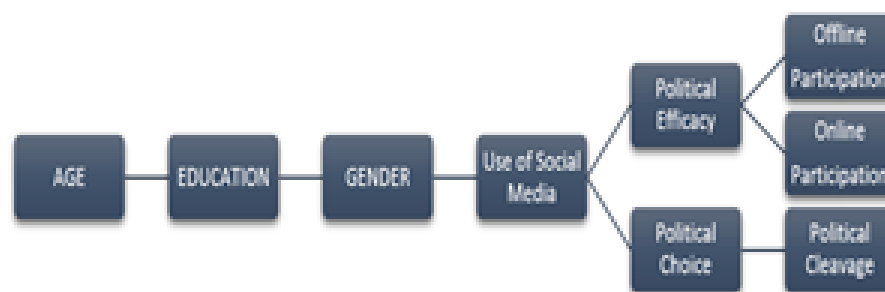

Figure 2. Research model figure

2.1. Theoretical Model

The theoretical framework of this research explained that youths used to discuss political matters in online and offline spheres (public and private spheres). The public sphere is not limited to the media or socio-spatial blogs for the public. The public sphere feeds public debates and mobilizes general masses into a particular issue. Thus, this is how civil society is active through the public sphere that enacts the broad masses into a specific discussion (Stewart, 2001).

In addition, the internet as well as the social media affects people to involve in campaigns and perform collective actions. 'Twitter' is, at present time, a day's natural way to changing the information, and it absolute lure cross-border audiences. People with diversity backgrounds are using twitter for news, social affairs, and, the most mainly, for political communication by political leaders, journalists, and internet users (Kaufmann & Jeandesboz, 2017).

In a similar way, the condition in Tunisia and Egypt in 2011, Blankson & Murphy (2007) stated that political communication and social actors, as they have close connection easy access to technology, are widely participating in the mobilization. A famous statement by Clinton (2010) expressed that internet freedom is a new policy in US foreign policy. It was evident that social media has gained much attention in society, and it is lid by over two million users in Indonesia.

This research deploys the famous theory from Habermas (1996) 'the public sphere.' The theory stated that public use to discuss their common matters in public spheres. Whereas the student in this research use to discuss their political issues in the public spheres (either online or offline).

In short, the statistical results of the literature state that people are likely to participate in social media. It is widely evident that social media enhanced the opportunity to participate in political matters. Thus, from this research, social media changed the pattern of political participation in Indonesia; it changed the shape of politics.

3. Research Methodology

The research applies a quantitative research method, and a questionnaire was prepared to collect the data. The data were collected in April 2019. This research was conducted in Indonesia. The mode of data collection was an online survey, which was conducted through Google Forms. The majority of the respondents in this research were the student of the universities. This research also allocated a timeframe to know the facts of the situation.

3.1. Sampling Technique and Data Collection Procedure

This research was designed to get the data from the students currently enrolled in Indonesian schools/universities. The purpose of the survey to gather data from the students, those having political background, political association, political involvement and currently having social media accounts. This research opted purposive random sampling technique to collect the data and results were carried out in tabulations, figures, and frequencies.

4. Results and Discussion

The overall sample research model (n=400) which shows socio-demographic variables are the level of education, new generation and male are more expected to participate in politics that can enhance the political efficacy among individuals. Table 1 shows the results of effectiveness and social media that sensitize the youths to participate and use social media accounts for political engagement.

The variables of political efficacy and the use of the internet show a significant relationship that addresses the strong relationship between online and offline participation. There is also a prediction that internet users are likely to participate and have enough knowledge of political matters, which usually helps to discuss the political matter in offline spheres. It is to conclude that the internet provides a platform for youths to participate in political matters (Masiha et al., 2018).

As youths are the main source of Indonesia, thus the respondents are more likely to believe that they can contribute to the political shift of their country. The majority of respondents showed that youths can change the political scenario of their county. The research conducted by Papacharissi (2002) and Gripsrud (2020) found that the engagement of youths in public spheres may enlighten their future.

The socio-demographic variables, education, and gender have a close effect on political efficacy and social media, and age is considered a significant indicator in political participation (Saud, 2018). The results show that Indonesian citizens were participating in politics by both offline and online spheres. Education is also a substantial variable that affects the participation of youths in political seminars or dialogue (Freedman, 2018; Saud, 2020). The more people knowing, they are more interested in participating in their rights (Manathunga, 2019). There is a significant indirect effect of efficacy on online and offline political participation.

Table 1. Frequency distribution regarding age and education of the respondents.

No	Category	Frequency	Percentage
A	**Gender of the respondents**		
1	Male	185	46.2
2	Female	215	53.8
	Total	400	100.0
B	**Age of the respondents**		
1	18-22 years	221	55.3
2	23-27 years	117	29.2
3	28- Above	62	15.5
	Total	400	100.0
C	**Educational qualification of the respondents**		
1	Intermediate	102	25.5
2	Diploma	56	14.0
3	Bachelor	162	40.5
4	Master	80	20.0
	Total	400	100.0

The data discusses the demographic characteristics of the respondents, age, education, and gender. Table 1 showed that the age, which is measured as a positive indicator for this research, indicates the political participation of youths.

More than half (53.8%) of the respondents are females, and less than half (46.2%) of the respondents are males. The results of the data given in the above table portray the age of the respondents. More than half (55.3%) of the respondents in this research belonged to the age of 18-22 years, little number (29.2%) belonged to the age group 23-27 years, and very little number (15.5%) belonged to the age group 28 years and above.

Respondents, aged 18-22 years, mostly participle and involved with domestic politics, in which it mean an appealingly sign for the prospective political participation of youths. The ratio of the respondents was identified by the variable of age, as well as gender, on the comparison of their political participation.

Education is a very important indicator of understanding politics, and it extends political efficacy among respondents, such as their awareness of political participation and choosing the right candidate while using political rights. Education can be measured and described under the categories of Intermediate (Senior High School), Diploma, Bachelor, and Master. Less than half (40.0%) of the respondents were bachelor (S1) and above, while nearly one third (25.5%) got inter-level (Senior High School) of education, 14.0% had passed the diploma level and in last 20.0% of the respondents did Master (S2). The research conducted by Mutz & Mondak (2006) emphasized that higher the quality of education, more will be participating in politics. Further, education is the best actor that causes voting and participating in politics.

Table 2. Frequency of respondents following politically oriented news (political activity) on social media.

No	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	Regularly	230	57.5
2	Several times in a week	108	27.0
3	Once a week	21	5.3
4	Rarely	41	10.2
	Total	400	100.0

Table 2 showed the findings of how frequently the respondents are participating in social media. More than half (57.5%) of the respondents regularly follow politics-oriented news on their cell phones via social media; among them, there were 27.0% of the respondents several times a week using social media to participate such as posting, reading, and writing the comments on social and political literature. Also, very few (10.2%) are using social media rarely, and only (5.3%) of the respondents are using social media once a week to participate in political activities. The role of social media is also an essential part of awareness of society. Thompson (2013) has contended that social media is even socializing societies and it is a significant public sphere in the industrial community. However, it is also asserted by Montgomery et al., (2008) in this digital era, the diversity of mass media and the internet has a significant role in society.

5. Conclusions

History has proven as a young man has succeeded, but challenging to keep coming, from home and abroad. Youths must learn from history to have an identity and have a strong foundation, and to know where change must endeavor. The present study found that youths in Indonesia are motivated to participate in political matters, their participation has increased political efficacy, and thus the political cleavage took the attention. It is also found that socio-demographic variables are affecting the individuals to vote for a specific party or candidate (Bandura, 1995). This research concluded that youths are the main indicator of change in society, and in Indonesian society, youths are high in number. It is a golden chance for the government to include youths in their matters to maintain a strong policy on social media and youths.

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7. Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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About the Authors

1. **Muhammad Saud,** International Staff-Lecturer at Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Airlangga University, Surabaya, Indonesia.
   E-Mail: muhhammad.saud@gmail.com

2. **Rachmah Ida,** obtained her Doctoral Degree from Curtin University of Technology, Perth, Australia. The author is a Professor in Media, Culture, and Society at the Department of Communication Studies, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Airlangga Univesity, Surabaya, Indonesia.
   E-Mail: rachmah.ida@fisip.unair.ac.id

3. **Ansar Abbas,** Doctoral student at Management Science Doctoral Study Program, Department of Management, Faculty of Economics and Business, Airlangga University, Surabaya, Indonesia.
    E-Mail: ansar.abbas-2018@feb.unair.ac.id

4. **Asia Ashfaq,** Lecturer at Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Bahria University, Islamabad, Pakistan. Her research areas are Migration, Health, Gender, and Gerontology.
    E-Mail: asiaashfaq.buic@bahria.edu.pk

5. **Araz Ramazan Ahmad**, obtained his Ph.D. Degree in Electronic Media from Salahadin University, Erbil, Kurdistan Region, Iraq, in 2018. The author is a Lecturer and Director of International Relations, Media, and Publications at the University of Raparin, Ranya, Kurdistan Region, Iraq, and at Tishk International University, Erbil, Kurdistan Region, Iraq.
    E-Mail: araz.ahmad85@uor.edu.krd

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