

The effect of social media usage on millennials' political knowledge and political participation in the presidential election in Indonesia: A structural equation modelling analysis

Pengaruh penggunaan media sosial terhadap pengetahuan politik dan partisipasi politik generasi milenial dalam pemilihan presiden di Indonesia: Analisis structural equation modelling

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Abstract

In democratic countries such as Indonesia, social media has gained importance as one of the tools to improve political literacy that leads to increase in political participation. This phenomenon has prompted many studies to explore the impact of technology-based communication tools on political knowledge and political participation. This article aims to determine the significance effect of social media usage on political knowledge and political participation in a structural model as well as to investigate whether social media usage effects political participation directly or through the mediating role of political knowledge. This study uses two theoretical frameworks, namely Uses and Gratification Theory and Cognitive-Affective-Conative Framework. The location of this research is in Surabaya, Indonesia with 400 respondents were taken by using multi-stage random sampling technique that represent the population of eligible voters in Surabaya. The research results show that the structural model built confirms the hypothesized theoretical model. The conclusion of this study shows that social media usage has directly and indirectly influences political participation in the presidential election in Indonesia.

Keywords: social media usage; political knowledge; political participation; U&G Theory

Abstrak

Di negara demokrasi seperti Indonesia, media sosial telah menjadi penting sebagai salah satu alat untuk meningkatkan literasi politik yang berujung pada peningkatan partisipasi politik. Fenomena ini telah mendorong banyak penelitian untuk mengeksplorasi dampak alat komunikasi berbasis teknologi terhadap pengetahuan politik dan partisipasi politik. Tujuan dari artikel ini untuk mengidentifikasi pengaruh penggunaan media sosial terhadap pengetahuan politik dan partisipasi politik dalam sebuah model struktural serta untuk mengetahui apakah penggunaan media sosial secara langsung atau tidak langsung memengaruhi partisipasi politik. Penelitian ini menggunakan dua kerangka teori yaitu Teori Uses and Gratification dan Kerangka Kognitif-Afektif-Konatif. Lokasi penelitian ini berada di Surabaya, Indonesia dengan jumlah 400 responden, teknik pengambilan sampel yang digunakan adalah multi-stage random sampling yang mewakili populasi pemilih yang memiliki hak pilih di Surabaya. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa model struktural yang dibangun mengonfirmasi model teoritis yang dihipotesiskan. Kesimpulan penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa penggunaan media sosial secara langsung dan tidak langsung memengaruhi partisipasi politik dalam pemilihan presiden di Indonesia.

Kata Kunci: penggunaan media sosial; pengetahuan politik; partisipasi politik; Teori U&G

Introduction

The development of Internet technology or what is often labeled as Web 2.0 places social media as a modern means of communication for individuals in the digital age. It not only facilitates social interaction but also plays a role in influencing and guiding individual behavior. The use of social media is a tool for people to socialize and could also be a control in shaping a person's behaviour. Social media can be involved in the information production process through comments, in which they can also easily discuss

with other users. This phenomenon encourages political actors, politicians, and mass media journalists to be able to adapt to the use of the internet (Norris 2003). Politicians have begun to realize that social media is very influential in winning elections since it has transformed into a place where online citizens become politically active (Morissan 2019).

Social media plays important role in helping candidates to gain votes significantly, especially among the millennial generation; as millennials is the target market for politicians to carry out their political marketing strategies (Hidayat 2018). With the nature of this kind of political communication, it provides an opportunity for prospective voters to have a multi-directional dialogue, both from candidate to voters, voters to candidate, and also between voters. Several studies have been examined regarding the effect of social media usage on political participation (Moeller et al. 2014, Ohme et al. 2020, Saud et al. 2020, Schäfer 2020). These various studies show different results, some have a direct effect (Gil de Zúñiga 2017, Park 2017), and some of the previous studies show no effect on both variables (Wahyutama 2019, Matthes et al. 2020).

Numerous researchers worldwide have shown that, historically, young adults tend to show less interest in conventional political activities than older generations (Delli Carpini 2017). They are also less likely to participate in voting and often exhibit lower levels of political awareness (Binder et al. 2021). However, the rise of social media has begun to shift this pattern, millennials can protest and express their opinions through social media just by using their fingers. Social media has transformed the political information that is considered unattractive and too heavy for young voters, into something lighter and popular that attracts the attention of young people. Damiarti et al. (2019) study highlights that the millennial generation is dependent on social media such as Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter. Thus, making campaigns through social media as one of the effective ways to gain the sympathy of millennials, in addition to traditional campaigns that are considered less effective in gaining votes from this generation. This is the thought that make millennials interested and active in political life.

In Indonesia, social media is used by political candidates to distribute information, branding, and upgrading political candidates. Joko Widodo's success can be used as an example in building political branding during the 2012 Jakarta Governor General Election. Starting from this event, the apathetic attitude from the young generation has started to decline, as a result of leveraging social media for political campaigns has become one of the most effective strategies to capture the attention and support of the millennial generation, particularly due to its widespread use by political candidates aiming to engage young voters (Priyono 2014). Consequently, social media is undeniably shaping the future landscape of presidential campaigns in Indonesia. Supporting this trend, a study conducted by Raenaldy (2017), titled "*The Relationship between Social Media and Chances of Victory for the Candidate Pair for the Governor of DKI Jakarta in the 2017 Election (A Study in North Jakarta Region)*," found that social media usage had a positive and significant impact on the likelihood of electoral success for candidates in the 2017 Jakarta governor election.

This research provides valuable insights into the role of social media in enhancing political knowledge and participation—particularly within the Indonesian context, especially where 60% of Indonesian internet users use smartphones (Kemp 2018). This study seeks to develop a model of the effect of social media usage for political participation both offline and online on millennials generation by addressing three research problems: (1) Does social media usage have effect on political knowledge and political participation? (2) Does political knowledge have effect on political participation? (3) Does social media usage have effect on political participation through political knowledge?

The widespread use of social media in Indonesia has become a place where online citizens become politically active, social media usage for information-seeking purposes has been shown to influence political participation, either directly or indirectly (Loader et al. 2015). Media also serves as a tool for individuals to socialize, while simultaneously acting as a mechanism that shapes their behavior. It can also be used as a means of transferring knowledge, the high political knowledge of a person because they obtain political information from consuming political news, such as exposure to online campaign news (Gil de Zúñiga et al. 2014, Schäfer 2020). Thus, social media plays a crucial role in delivering political information and enhancing citizens' political knowledge, which in turn contributes to increased voter turnout (Ohme et al. 2020).

The more political content people consume on social media, the more politically informed they become, which ultimately leads to higher levels of political engagement and the more likely they are to vote. People who were originally not interested in engaging in political activity can change and become involved politically because of the advantages of social media. The exposure of content uploaded by candidates, online media, and relatives have positive effects on millennials' political knowledge gain, such as information about current political situation, campaign programs brought by candidates, and candidates' activity during campaign (Vromen et al. 2015). The current study attempts to fill the gaps by exploring the effect between the use of social media and political participation directly and indirectly through political knowledge, by suggesting two research frameworks based on the Uses and Gratification Theory and the Cognitive-Affective Framework.

This study applies the Uses and Gratifications Theory as its theoretical foundation, which explains how individuals actively choose and use specific types of media to fulfill their needs (see Figure 1). By using this theory, it is useful in revealing the way millennials intentionally engage with social media platforms to satisfy their needs and give them gratification as the expected outcomes, particularly in seeking and sharing political information. According to Katz (1973), an individual's interests, values, and social status significantly influence their media choices. This theory helps the media to know the motives of users in determining the media they use. These motives consist of information, social interaction, and entertainment needs (McQuail 1983). When their informational needs are fulfilled for knowledge acquisition, it can increase user's political participation (Vaccari & Valeriani 2021), and will also increase the level of offline political activities (Gil de Zúñiga et al. 2017). This study focuses on understanding the millennials' social media usage derived from their cognitive needs which is related to strengthening their political knowledge. By using the Uses and Gratification theory, this study engages with the above findings to explore the relationship between social media usage and political participation within the Indonesian context.



Figure 1.
Uses & Gratifications Theory
Source: Katz et al. (1973)

This research uses Cognitive – Affective – Conative (CAC) framework by Fishbein & Ajzen (1975) as the second theory that is constructed to examine the research question. This framework is particularly relevant as it provides a comprehensive structure for understanding behavior, linking individuals' thoughts, emotions, and actions (see Figure 2). The important concept of this theory applied in this study is that the behaviour (conative) can be derived or reformed by one's attitude (affective) that is influenced by the receiver's knowledge (cognitive). The CAC framework can be applied for election-campaign-related activities where voters could gain pre-information before they actually vote (Moon et al. 2011).

But both theories can measure the positive interrelationship between knowledge and behaviour, and when one of the variables is increased, the others will follow. Political participation requires two major tasks which are information processing (cognition) and decision making (conation). The cognitive component namely related to individuals' knowledge, views, and beliefs of the message conveyed, the affective component related to the communicant's emotions and feelings of the message conveyed, and the conative component is related to the change in behaviour of individuals (Gartner 1993).



Figure 2.
Cognitive – Affective – Conative framework
Source: Fishbein & Ajzen (1975)

In this study, the researcher focuses only on the cognitive and conative aspects to assess the relationship between the research variables. Because it only measures the participation of millennials that is enough to be measured through political knowledge or the cognitive aspect. In the context of this study, the cognitive aspect refers to the millennial's knowledge regarding the political candidate's image and campaign program, whereas the conative aspect refers to the willingness of millennials to conduct political participation.

This study aims to examine the effect of social media usage on political participation, both its direct and indirect influence through the variable of political knowledge in a structural model, focusing on millennial generation who are the active users of social media. As the millennial generation increasingly engages with social media, this growing trend warrants deeper investigation. In the Indonesian context, limited research has been conducted on the relationship between social media usage and the political behavior of millennials.

Although this study analyzes the 2019 Indonesia presidential election and the research was conducted in 2021, this study offers novelty by propose deeper insights and more comprehensive results. The time gap explores how millennial voters' knowledge and participation of the 2019 election may have evolved in two years following the election. Social media usage for the millennial generation is a growing practice that should be further explored. In Indonesia, there are very few studies have been conducted on social media usage and millennial generation. Meanwhile, millennials have become important potential voters to gain votes from since this generation holds the largest number in the 2019 presidential elections, so their votes can make significant contribution. According to a survey by LIPI, millennials accounted for approximately 40 percent of the total voter population—around 80 million out of 185 million registered voters—in the 2019 Indonesian presidential election (Abdi 2018).

The urgency of this study is rooted in its alignment with the dynamics of today's political climate, where social media provides opportunities for young people to be politically active and engage with political issues. Despite the evident importance of this phenomenon, scholarly exploration remains lacking from quantitative perspective. Existing literatures mostly focus on qualitative analysis and case studies, so statistical measurements are not provided. This research aims to enhance theoretical discourse and serve as a bridge in closing the current knowledge gap, especially in developing countries.

Research Method

The research is conducted in Surabaya, Indonesia from 1 August to 10 August 2021. This study employs quantitative approach, allowing variables to be measured numerically and analyzed using statistical methods. The data collection technique was conducted through structured interviews directly with respondents. The research population in this study refers to Surabaya citizens who are eligible to vote, under the condition of more than 17 years old or already married. Moreover, this study focuses on millennial voters as described above referring to voters born in 1980-2000 (Ali & Purwandi 2017). Therefore, it can be stated that the millennial generation of voters in 2019 is in the age range of 19-39 at the time, so in the year 2021, they are between 21-41 years old.

The sample size for this research is 400 people through random sampling with a margin error of +/- 5%. This study applied multistage random sampling as the sampling method. This study uses data collection techniques in the form of questionnaires. SPSS program is used to processed the data, which SmartPLS is used as the statistical software to test the models. Partial Least Square (PLS) – Structural Equation Model (SEM) technique is applied in this study to analyze the relationship and the influence of social media usage, political knowledge, and political participation.

Result and Discussion

The findings of this research are organized into six sections. The first section presents the characteristics of the respondents, aiming to provide an overview of their social and economic backgrounds. The second section presents data regarding respondents' social media usage. The third section shows data regarding respondents' political knowledge. The fourth section presents data regarding respondents'

political participation. The fifth section displays data regarding measurement model to determine the relationship between an observed variable (indicator or questionnaire item) and the variable designed to be measured. The final section shows data regarding the path coefficient value and path analysis which describes the strength of the influence between latent variables.

The social and economic characteristic of respondent

This section describes the characteristics of respondents in this study. In terms of gender distribution, the gap of male and female respondents in this study is not much different. There is a higher number of male respondents (220) than female (180), representing a ratio of 55% and 45%, respectively. The age range of the majority of respondents in this study is 21-31 years, covers 47% of the total respondents. This means the majority of respondents in this study are adult voters, whereas the percentage of respondents who are under 21 years old is only 8%. Further, this study shows 95% of the respondents professed Islam, this number was followed by 3% of the total respondents who professed Christianity. Most of the respondents have self-employed jobs, which is 34%. It is then followed by 32% of the respondents who work as a private employee. Most respondents (40%) earned IDR 4 million - <6 million per month, followed by 20% of respondents who claim to have no income.

Respondents' social media usage

This section describe the social media usage of respondents. Social media usage is measured through two indicators, which are frequency and duration in accessing social media. The further description for the indicators can be seen from the Figure 3:

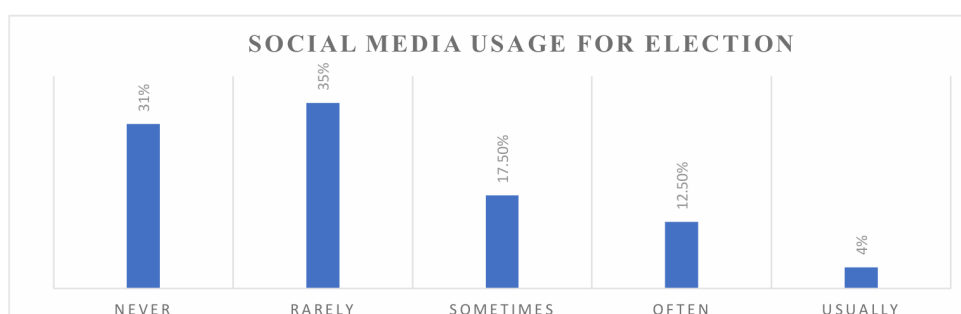


Figure 3.

Frequency of social media usage for election

Source: Research results processed by the author

Figure 3 shows the majority of the respondents (35%), rarely (1-3 times a day) utilized social media to find information and/or news related to the election, followed by 31% of them never utilized social media for the same purposes, and those who admitted often (7-9 times a day) using social media only 12,5%.

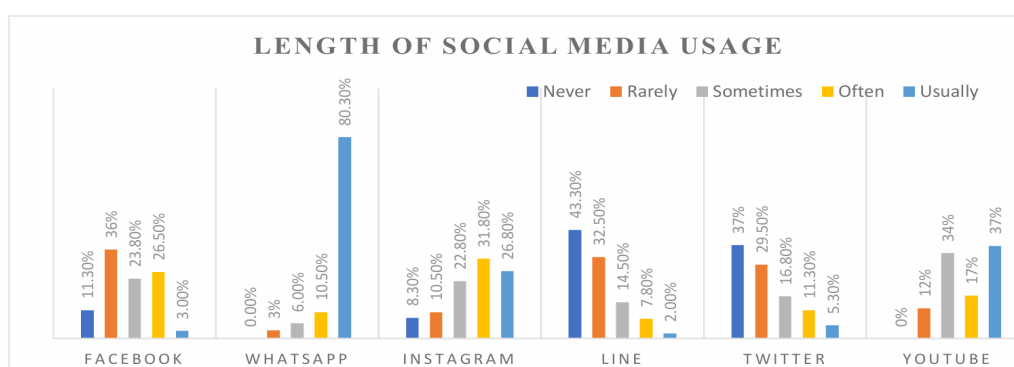


Figure 4.

Length of social media usage

Source: Research results processed by the author

This section is aimed to identify the time pattern of the respondents in using social media platforms. Figure 4 illustrates the most of the respondents (80,3%) usually use WhatsApp for more than 120 minutes, followed by 37% of the respondents usually use YouTube and 28,8% of respondents usually use Instagram. It is interesting to note that 43,3% of the respondents never used Line and 37% of them never used Twitter daily (N=400). The results indicated a significant difference between WhatsApp and Line, where WhatsApp is more popular among millennial voters. In addition, Twitter has a lower appeal to the millennials since the platform does not provide too much entertainment compared to YouTube in which all respondents access the platform every day. This data seems in line with the low usage rate of millennial voters to news or political information about elections, where Twitter users are generally interested in issues or information about politics.

Indonesia, as one of the countries with the most social media users, there are approximately 167 million people using social media in 2023. This is about 78% of Internet users or 212.9 million people or about 60.4 percent of the 276.4 million people who use the internet (Muhtar 2023). Social media allows politicians to communicate directly with citizens and potential voters, by delivering their political messages that match their characteristics, allowing candidates to connect with voters, and enabling candidates to share their visions and missions. Social media provides opportunities for millennials to be active in politics, millennials are allowed to actively participate in political discussions, whether through comments, likes, shares and even engage directly in a political dialogue.

Respondents' political knowledge

This section explains the political knowledge of respondents, political knowledge is measured using 4 indicators, namely knowledge for the mechanism of the election, knowledge for the function of the election, knowledge for the presidential candidate's profiles, and knowledge for the presidential candidate's campaign programs.

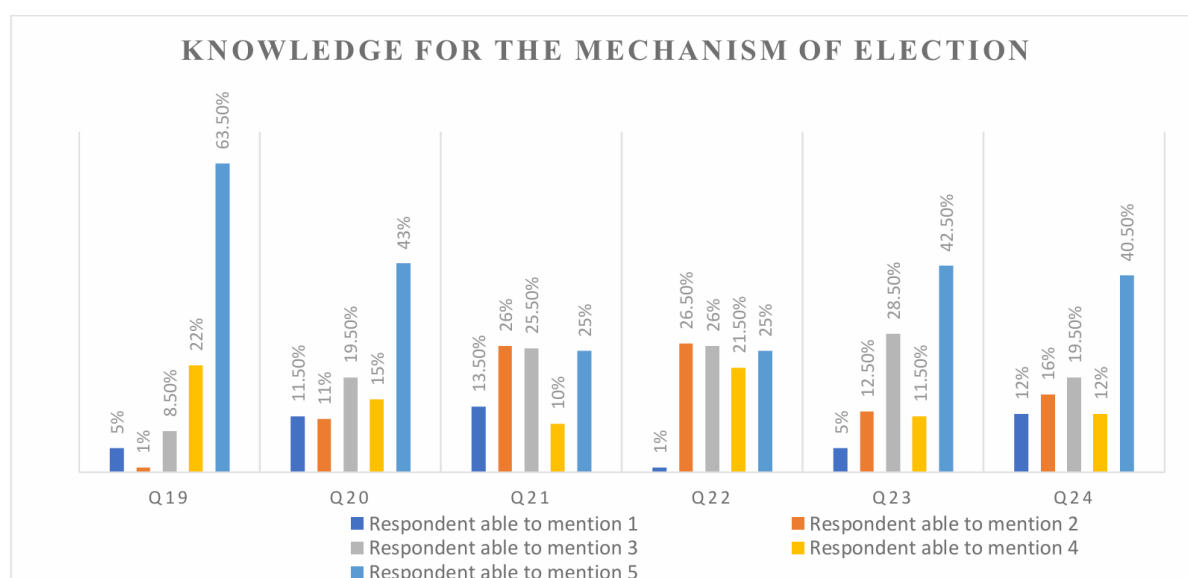


Figure 5.

Knowledge for the mechanism of election

Source: Research results processed by the author

As Figure 5 illustrates that more than one-third of the respondents (63,50%) could answer 5 of different government institutions (presidential election, parliamentary election, senate election, legislative election at province level, and legislative election at local level) that voters can vote during the 2019 election, and only 1% of them can mention one of the characteristics of voters who are eligible to vote in the 2019 presidential election. From the 400 respondents, almost half of them were able to mention 5 characteristics in every question. It can be seen that in each question less than 15% of the respondents can only answer 1 (N=400). Therefore, it can be said they have a high understanding of the mechanism of the election.

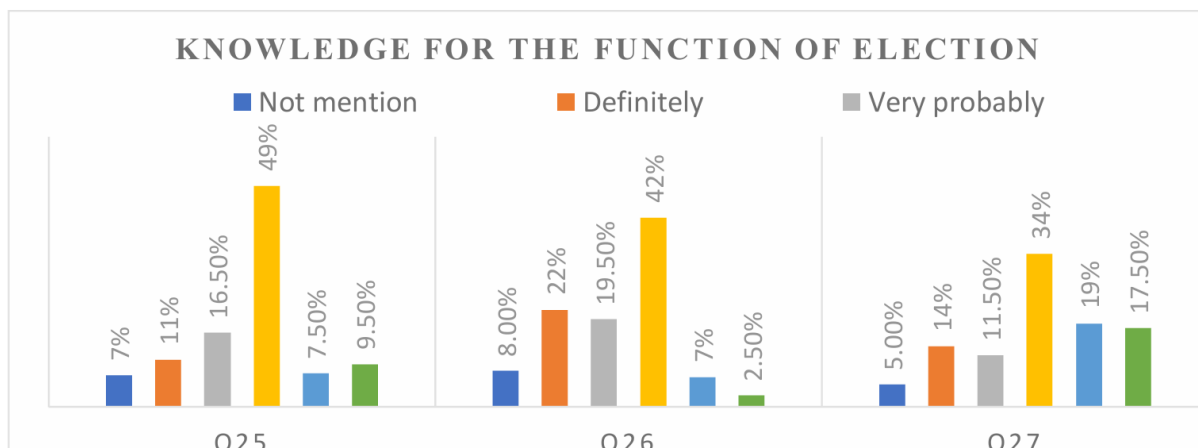


Figure 6.
Knowledge for the function of election
Source: Research results processed by the author

The respondent's political knowledge regarding the function of election in Indonesia was studied while the researcher was interested to know about the respondent's view on the impact of the presidential election. As seen in Figure 6, a large percentage of respondents said that presidential election could possibly use effectively to create a peaceful change of a national leader (49%), followed by 42% of the respondents declared that presidential election could possibly resolve the socio-economic and political problems that arise and 34% of them stated that presidential election could possibly use as a means or instruments to provide rewards and punishments for the incumbent (N=400).

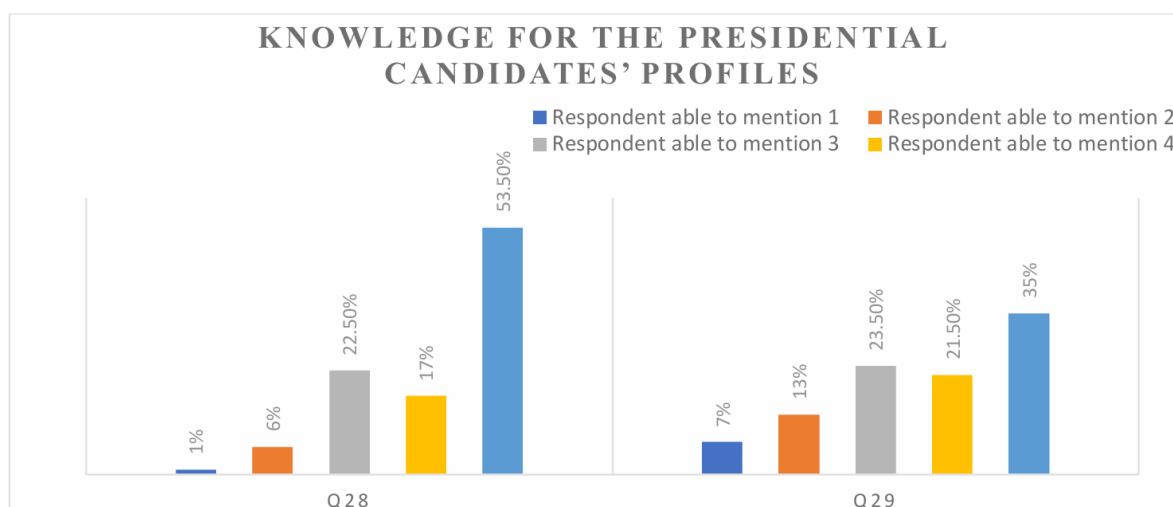


Figure 7.
Knowledge for the presidential candidate's profiles
Source: Research results processed by the author

Furthermore, out of 400 respondents, almost all of the respondents were able to mention at least 1 item of the presidential and vice-presidential background profiles. Additionally, more than half of the respondents (53,5%) can answer 5 items of the background profiles of Joko Widodo and Ma'ruf Amin. In contrast, respondents have a lower understanding regarding the background profiles of Prabowo Subianto and Sandiaga Uno, merely 35% of respondents were able to mention 5 items out of the 10 background profiles (N=400). Thus, it can be concluded from Figure 7 that the majority of the respondents have high understanding because they can answer 5 points and get the highest score in terms of the presidential candidate's program for Joko Widodo – Ma'ruf Amin (53,5%) and Prabowo Subianto – Sandiaga Uno (35%).

It can be seen from Figure 8 that all respondents can mention at least 1 of the items regarding the campaign programs of Joko Widodo – Ma'ruf Amin, whereas 15% of the respondents cannot mention any of the campaign programs by Prabowo Subianto – Sandiaga Uno. The majority of respondents (33,5%) can

mention 3 points of the campaign programs offered by Joko Widodo and Ma'ruf Amin. In comparison, the knowledge that respondents have towards Prabowo Subianto and Sandiaga Uno has a lower score of 41%, in which most of the respondents can only answer 1 item out of 10 campaign programs (N=400).

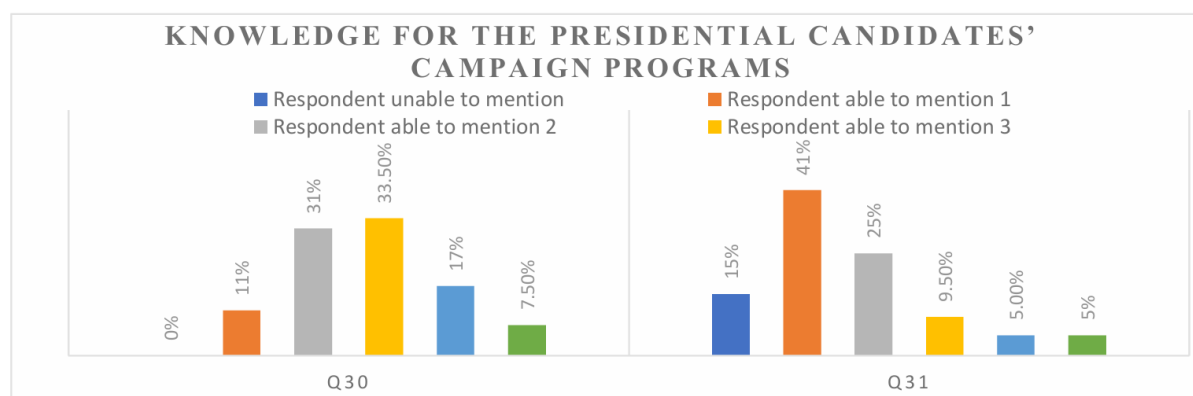


Figure 8.
Knowledge for presidential candidate's campaign program
Source: Research results processed by the author

The findings of this study may be influenced by the timing of data collection, which occurred two years after the 2019 presidential election. The two-year gap can be contributed to a decline in respondents' memory in recalling the political events, candidates, programs of candidates, and any related information to the election. As a result, some of the respondents can only answer 2-3 questions, since they may have found it hard to answer the questions accurately due to natural fading of memories not only because of the lack of understanding.

An interesting result of study by Perangin-angin & Zainal (2018) is that the political participation of voters is very low because they have no deep knowledge of politics. Through social media, millennials consume more political information and can learn about candidate profiles and backgrounds, candidate campaign programs, voting processes, and election functions which ultimately lead them to have higher political knowledge. The latest research by Kim et al. (2020) revealed social media users that actively share and comment regarding political content could significantly enhances users' political knowledge. Findings by Halim et al. (2021) in the same year suggested that individuals with higher political knowledge are more inclined to participate in online political activities.

Respondents' political participation

This section explains the political participation of respondents, political participation is measured through 3 indicators, which are the use of the rights to vote, offline participation, and online participation. The results showed the average political participation by the respondents had a low level of offline and online political participation. The political participation comprised 11 questions that related to the behaviour of millennials in different political activities during the 2019 presidential election such as attending an open campaign, follow a candidate's social media account, or share information on social media related to the 2019 election. The results of the 3 indicators are discussed below:

As shown in Figure 9, the majority of the respondents (75%) use their rights to vote in the 2019 presidential election (N=400). It also means 75% of the respondents went to the polling station. This trend shows that even though there are 35% of respondents who rarely use social media usage for election, but some of the respondents still use their voting rights.

Generally, the majority of the respondents (74%) never participated in open and/or close campaigns during the 2019 election (Figure 10). Similarly, most of them (81%) never get involved in volunteer activities such as door to door campaigns, donating funds and convincing others with their choices (N=400). It is clear that only 2% of the respondents usually involved in open and/or close campaign, while only 1% of them usually involved in volunteer activities (N=400).

This finding aligns with the study by Theocharis et al. (2023), which suggests that social media can directly contribute to increased offline political participation among young adults. Similarly, previous study by Kahne and Boyer (2018) proposed that social media plays a motivational role in encouraging youth political engagement, as its networking features help young individuals develop the skills and psychological readiness necessary for offline political involvement.



Figure 9.
Voter turnout

Source: Research results processed by the author

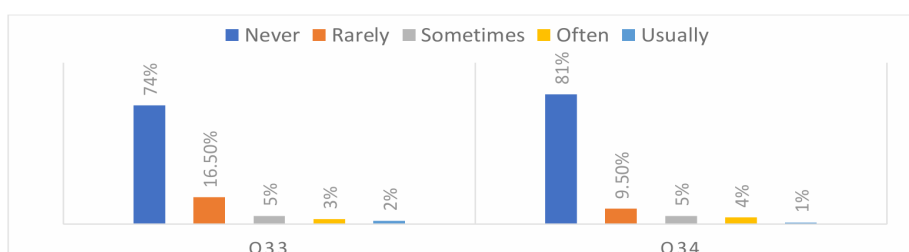


Figure 10.
Offline participation

Source: Research results processed by the author

This finding is interesting because very few millennial voters are involved in mass campaigning or offline participation. This shift in communication strategy is related to the high online participation using digital channels even though it is only limited to the activities of following candidate's account. The results of the study show that almost 60% of the respondents, 58% to be exact, millennial voters are involved in online political participation activities. As illustrated in the Figure 11:

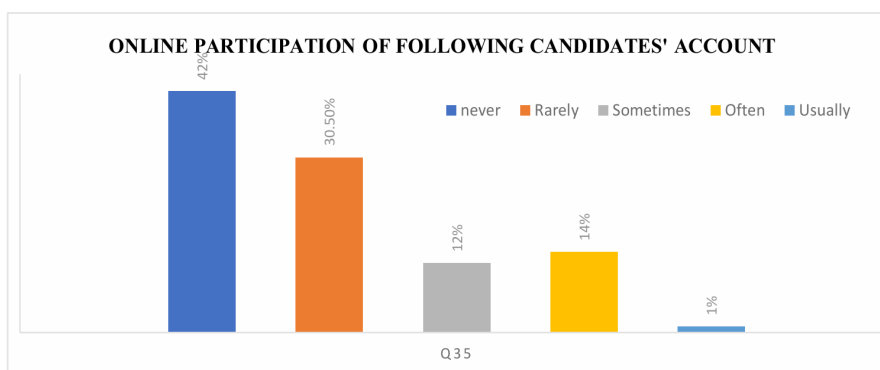


Figure 11.

Online participation of following candidate's account
Source: Research results processed by the author

Although the online participation involvement in the form of following candidates is quite high, in other online participation, millennial voter engagement is still very low, as shown in Figure 11. In terms of online participation, in general, more than half of the total respondents, have a high score in never

getting involved in online participation towards all the indicators (follow, click a like button, click a dislike button, give comment, share information, express political interest, persuade friends, and oppose friends). This means that more than half of the respondents not considered social media as a place for them to participate in politics, which accounts for more than 50% of all indicators. Thus, the participation of both offline and online by 400 respondents has the same trend.

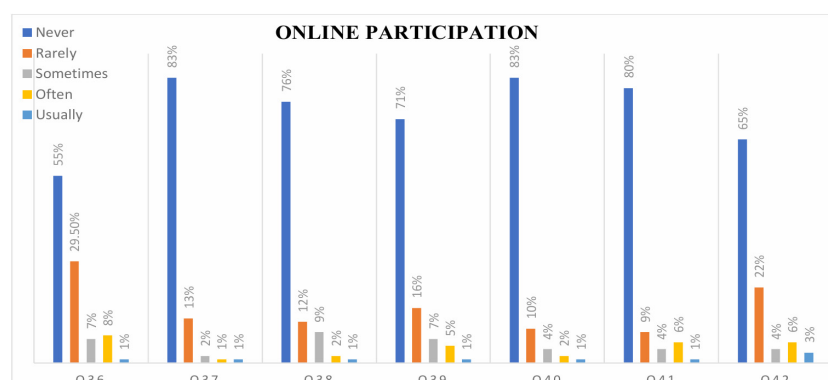


Figure 12.

Online participation

Source: Research results processed by the author

It can be seen from Figure 12 that most of the respondents have a low rate of online participation. This result indicated only 1% of them are usually involved in almost all online participation indicators. The domination for the use of non-political content on social media by the youth could be one of the reasons (Binder et al. 2021). The fact that many young adults are using social media primarily for entertainment purposes, but many previous scholars do not consider the large range of content on social media (Dimitrova & Matthes 2018, Theocharis et al. 2023). The gap between the duration and frequency use of social media and online political participation such as the number of likes, comments, and shares highlights a challenge. It suggests that although there is a high frequency and long duration of social media usage, it does not necessarily guarantee the success of online political participation. The online political participation's results are substantially low compared to the offline participation.

Measurement model

The measurement model is intended to determine the relationship between an observed variable such as an indicator or questionnaire item and the variable designed to be measured. This model is important to find out how well several indicator variables fit so that they are reliable and can be used to measure latent variables. The result for PLS modelling can be seen in Figure 13:

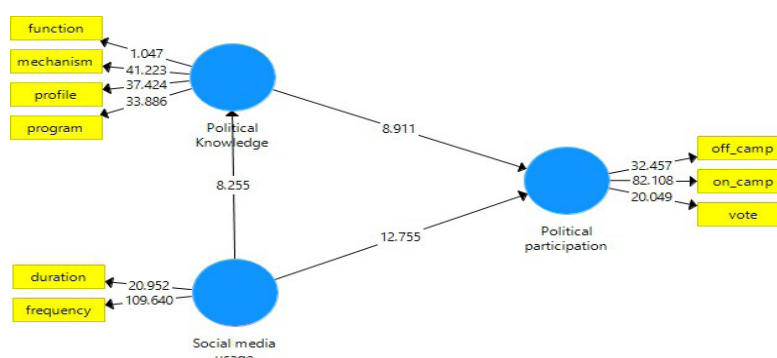


Figure 13.

Path Modelling

Source: Research results processed by the author

As it can be seen from the existing T-statistics values (Figure 13), it appears that the function of election indicator on the political knowledge variable is fairly weak and not significant (with a cut-off point of 1.96). Therefore, the function indicator is removed from the model, and the following results are obtained:

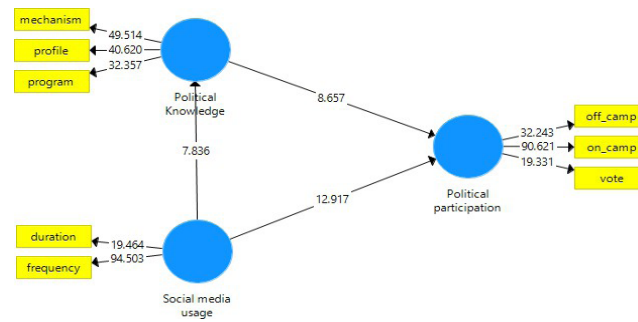


Figure 14.

New path modelling

Source: Research results processed by the author

Figure 14 illustrates the path model that connects the latent variables is significant. Then, several things will be evaluated, namely those concerning the evaluation of the measurement model (outer model) and evaluation of the structural model (inner model). To ensure the credibility and integrity of the study, Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) were performed to confirm and validate the reliability of the measures.

To assess the consistency of one indicator with other indicators on latent variables, this study uses composite reliability (> 0.7) and AVE (> 0.5). Composite reliability and AVE of all the three latent variables can be seen in the Table 1:

Table 1.
CR and AVE

Latent variable	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Social media usage	0.844	0.733
Political knowledge	0.877	0.704
Political participation	0.845	0.650

Source: Research results processed by the author

Table 1 displays the composite reliability of all latent variables shows a fairly high result that surpass the required score of 0.7. Similarly, as shown in the table 1 the AVE for the current study has exceeds the set limit, in which the threshold for the acceptable AVE is 0.5. Hence, it indicates that each indicator is reliable and can be used to measure each latent variable.

Path coefficient value and path analysis

The path coefficient value (which describes the strength of the influence between latent variables) can be seen in Figure 15:

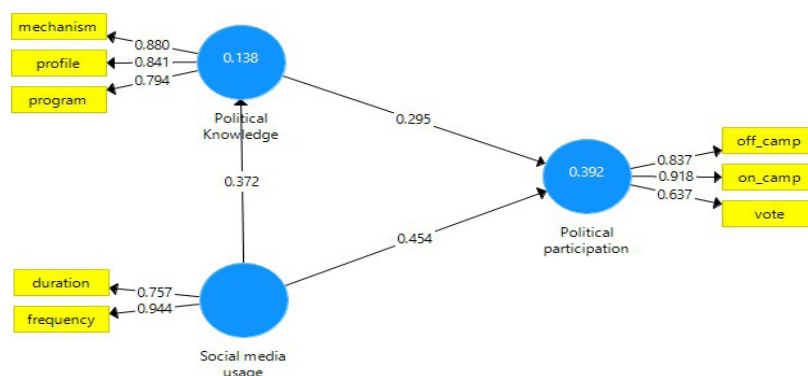


Figure 15.

Path coefficient value

Source: Research results processed by the author

Structural model evaluation is used to measure the relationship and effect between one latent variable and other latent variables. Table 2 shows the coefficient score to evaluate the influence on each latent variable:

Table 2.
Coefficient score of structural model evaluation

Path	Path Coefficient	T-Statistics	P values
Social media usage → Political knowledge	0.372	7.836	0.000
Social media usage → Political participation	0.454	12.917	0.000
Political knowledge → Political participation	0.295	8.657	0.000

Source: Research results processed by the author

From Table 2, the influence of social media usage on political participation has the highest coefficient score, which is 0.454. This implies there is a strong influence of social media usage on political participation when comparing the three paths above. Then, followed by the influence of social media usage on political knowledge with a coefficient score of 0.372. Whereas the relationship between political knowledge and political participation has the lowest coefficient score between the three influences on latent variables (0.295). In conclusion, broadly, it demonstrates a weak trend in the framework model, the longer the path, the lower the coefficient score γ that the latent variable has. Additionally, there is a significant trend towards the influence of social media usage on political participation.

As explained above, the influence of one variable on another is significant, because the T-statistics results for each latent variable are more than 1.96. There are three models to describe the influence of social media usage on political participation as shown in Table 3.

Table 3.
Direct and indirect relationship of social media usage and political knowledge towards political participation

Variable	Direct effect	Indirect effect	Total effect
Social media usage	0.454	0.109	0.563
Political knowledge	0.295	-	0.295

Source: Research results processed by the author

From Table 3, it can be concluded that the direct influence of social media usage on political participation (0.454) is stronger, than the direct influence of political knowledge on political participation (0.295). Social media usage also affects political participation, through political knowledge (mediator variable), which is referred to as indirect influence. The indirect effect of social media usage on political participation is smaller (less strong, $0.454 \times 0.295 = 0.109$) compared to the direct effect of social media usage on political participation (0.454). The VAF (Variance Accounted For) score is 19.36%, this is obtained from multiplying the indirect path with the total score ($0.109/0.563$). Because the VAF value is $< 20\%$, thus it indicates that political knowledge is a weak mediator.

The illustration of the influence (direct and indirect) of social media usage and political knowledge on political participation is as follows:

First, direct influence of social media usage on political knowledge:

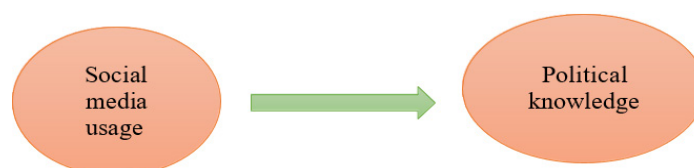


Figure 16.
Social media usage directly affects political participation
Source: Created by the author

From Figure 16, it can be seen that there is a direct and significant influence of social media usage on political knowledge. Social media usage affects political knowledge with γ score of 0.37 and a T-statistics score of 7.83 (with a note that the cut-off point is >1.96 , if $\alpha=5\%$). It means that if social media usage increases, then political knowledge will also increase.

Second, direct influence of political knowledge on political participation:

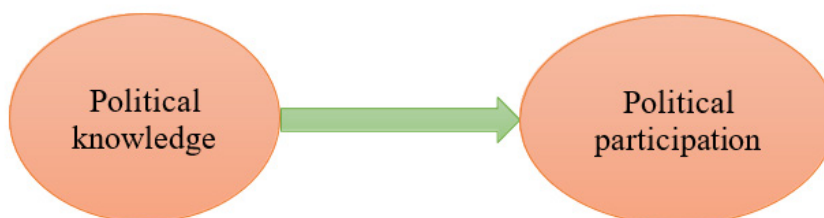


Figure 17.
Political knowledge directly affects political participation
Source: Created by the author

As illustrated in Figure 17, the relationship of political knowledge and political participation also has a significant influence. The political knowledge influences the political knowledge with γ score of 0.29. Millennials who have high political knowledge regarding the function and mechanism of election, as well as the product knowledge of political candidates' profiles and campaign programs are more likely to conduct political participation in the form of offline and online participation. The P value shows a 0.01 level of confidence which indicates that the hypothesis is accepted and significant.

Third, indirect influence of social media usage on political participation:

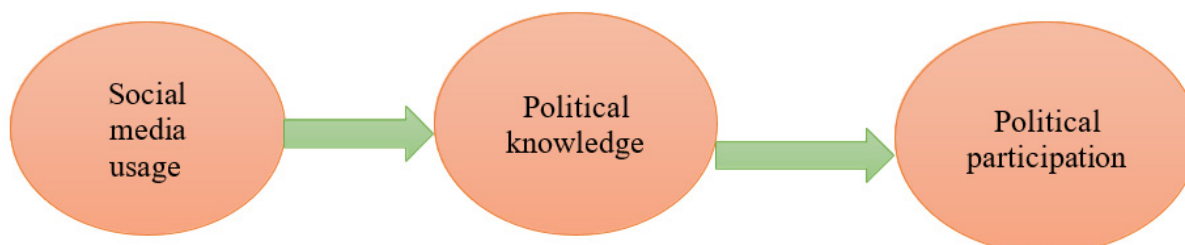


Figure 18.
Social media usage, mediated by political knowledge influences political participation.
Source: Created by the author

In the third model (see Figure 18), it is clear that social media usage, mediated by political knowledge has a significant effect on millennials' political participation. The higher frequency and duration of social media usage that millennials carry out, the higher tendency of millennials to participate in politics. Further, the P-value generates a 0.01 level of confidence which indicates that the hypothesis is accepted and significant.

The findings confirm previous research indicating that social media usage has a direct and significant relationship towards political participation; which has previously been discussed earlier by Priyono (2014), Brian et al. (2015), Gil de Zúñiga et al. (2014), Raenaldy (2017), Schäfer (2020), Ohme et al. (2020), Halim et al. (2021), and Kim et al. (2020). However, this study aligns more closely with finding of Dimitrova & Matthes (2018), which suggest that even though social media usage has a limited influenced on political knowledge as a mediating variable, it still exerts a significant impact on political participation. Additionally, previous study by Richey (2008) found that political knowledge fully mediates the relationship between social media usage and political participation, meanwhile, this research discovered that political knowledge only partially mediates the relationship.

This study challenges the findings by Cacciatore et al. (2018) that show a negative influence of social media usage for political knowledge and political participation. Even though political knowledge as a mediator variable is comparably weak despite the significance of the variable as the factor to influence political participation, there is a high possibility of another mediator variable to give out a higher degree of significance than the one in this research. Recent scholar highlights the evolving dynamics of political communication the digital era, Theocharis et al. (2023) found that emotions play a big part in why people take online political action. For instance, someone might join a protest or sign a petition not because they fully understand all the details, but because they feel angry, inspired, or connected to what they saw on social media. This might explain why political knowledge is not the strongest mediator variable in this research, people may not need to be highly informed to participate in politics.

Conclusion

To conclude, the findings of this study indicate that social media usage has both direct and indirect effects on political participation in the 2019 Indonesia presidential election. The results confirm a strong relationship between social media usage on political knowledge, political knowledge on political participation, as well as social media usage on political participation. The path coefficients for the three hypotheses of H1, H2, H3 were 0.372, 0.295, and 0.454. The empirical results support all the three posited research hypotheses, first, there is a direct influence of social media usage on political knowledge, second, there is a direct influence of political knowledge on political participation, and third, there is an indirect influence of social media usage on political participation, through the mediating role of political knowledge. It is noteworthy that the findings have affirmed social media usage influences millennial voters in attaining voting intention.

While this study makes substantial contributions to research knowledge and practice, it had some limitations. From the description of the data, it shows that the composite values for the level of political participation of millennial voters are relatively low. Out of the three indicators or observed variables to measure the latent variable of political participation, only the indicator for voting attendance shows a fairly high level of participation. Meanwhile, for the other two indicators, namely offline participation, and online participation, the scores are quite low. If the three indicators above were separated into two latent variables, namely the level of attendance and offline-online participation, this study might produce a different structural model, with a very strong significance value for one of the latent variables.

In addition, in terms of research timing, the interviews were carried out about 2.5 years after the 2019 presidential election was conducted, so this rather long period could influence the whole results because it affects respondents' memories regarding political issues and information surrounding the 2019 election. This fading memory could affect the respondent's knowledge about the candidate's product knowledge such as the candidate's background and the candidate's campaign program. It seems possible that the findings will be different if the study is conducted right after the election.

Further, this research recommends future researchers who are interested in this topic to consider using a more comprehensive approach, this can be achieved through a mixed methods research approach, which integrates both qualitative and quantitative approach to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of social media usage's effect. Furthermore, it would be valuable to explore the impact of social media by comparing the behaviors of millennials and generation Z, in order to assess whether generation Z exhibits a stronger tendency to be influenced by social media of both offline and online political participation. Future research should expand the geographical scope of this study to various cities and regions in Indonesia to obtain a more representative picture.

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