

The Role of Social-Media in Increasing Millennial Political Participation in the Medan Johor Subdistrict

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Abstract. Millennials' subordinate role and participation in the political process have resulted in declining trust. Social media is used in several ways during regional elections and other political events, like campaigning for candidates' spouses. The purpose of this study is to analyze the role of social media in increasing the political participation of millennials in the 2021 Medan mayoral election with a case study on the couple Bobby Nasution and Aulia Rachman in Medan Johor District. Four 20-year-old respondents from the Medan Johor District were interviewed for this qualitative study. The data is analyzed descriptively. The results show that social media is an essential part of the political process, including collecting aspirations and public participation among the spouses of regional head candidates. In Medan, Johor, millennials believe that using social media as a catalyst to participate in politics tends to be less effective. The role of social media is indeed able to increase the participation of millennials, but it is not based on reality. The role of social media in the selection of Bobby Nasution and Aulia Rachman's partner is: a) as an agent of political socialization to deliver the program to be carried out; b) for the prestige manikin of the couple Bobby Nasution and Aulia Rachman; c) as a means of online campaigning; d) as a place for the dissemination of information related prospective spouses. Social media is a driver and distributor of the latest information updates from prospective couples to attract public participation and trust, especially among millennials.

Keywords: Political perceptions; millennials; elections; social media; Medan-Johor

INTRODUCTION

Social media has become a basic need for individuals, including today's millennial generation. Social media makes it easy for people of different ages to connect and talk to each other from anywhere and at any time (Matthes, 2022; Raksha, 2019; Yan, 2021). As a result, some millennials use social media throughout the day (Fatema et al., 2022; Raksha, 2019). Social media is more than just a vehicle for obtaining information. However, it is also used for daily activities such as work, study, and in the political world, it is used for campaign activities for spouses of prospective

leaders (Maharani & Nurafifah, 2020; Nur, 2020). According to research by the Pew Research Center (2018), millennials today cannot live without the internet. The use of information and communication technology in various fields makes the distribution of information up-to-date, fast, and efficient (Nur, 2020). In politics, social media such as Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, Twitter, and others are used to voice aspirations or opinions in the public space, especially during the general election (Juditha, 2019; Komariah & Kartini, 2019).

Currently, a pretty interesting phenomenon, the existence of social media in every walk of life, makes election activities and processes more open and faster, especially in the campaign process. Referring to the phenomenon found in the field shows that millennials tend to have low sensitivity to the world of politics. Hamid et al. (2022), also say that only some millennials are interested in joining a political party. Most people do not trust politicians are skeptical of different political institutions and how well they work together (Haste & Hogan, 2006). The trust of the millennial generation needs to be improved to maintain political participation in many places, including Indonesia, which makes the millennial generation's participation in politics relatively low (Tariq et al., 2022).

Political participation focuses on community participation in politics, that is, the actions of a person or group of people who actively take part in political life by choosing state leaders and who, directly or indirectly, can influence the policies of the central, regional, and district/city governments (Ahmad et al., 2019; Effing et al., 2011; Marquart et al., 2020; Theocharis et al., 2022). Triwahyuningsih (2019) says that political participation is usually measured at the central, regional, and district/city levels during elections, which are democratic activities. People participating in politics is the "heart of democracy," which affects how well election activities go. With the election, the new

government is elected legally and in line with the constitution. This is because the people consented to the new government (S. Lee et al., 2022; Marquart et al., 2020). The opinions of Prihatmoko (2003) and Maharani & Nurafifah (2020) explain that elections figuratively have three objectives: choosing government leaders and prioritizing public needs; transferring private interests to the interests of institutions; in addition, mobilizing community participation and support for change in an area.

Millennials' need for more political involvement is one of the most critical problems of our time (Sucipto, 2019). This is because the low level of public participation is caused by the high level of distrust in the community towards the prospective leader; in addition to finding negative issues with the candidate's spouse, unhealthy campaigning through social media becomes a process of worsening trust in the political world (Sa'ban et al., 2020; Sa'ban & Wijaya, 2018). In line with studies conducted in Singapore, it shows that the low political participation of millennials is caused by young people or millennials having a lack of trust in the political process, which has implications for low political participation. Also, the younger generation is usually less interested in politics than the older generation (Zhang, 2022).

Much work has been done to get more people involved in politics, especially millennials, by using social media for campaigning (Huttunen & Christensen, 2020).

Political parties should use social media to run their campaigns and give the spouses of candidates as much information as possible. Several studies show that social media is an excellent way for the public, the government, and the candidates' spouses to communicate during an election. This can make millennials want to learn more about potential partners (Munzir, 2019), making them more interested in politics and more likely to trust the spouses of elected leaders (Nur, 2020).

However, unlike the conditions during the regional elections in Medan, which involved Bobby Nasution and Aulia Rachman as a pair of candidates, we found that it showed the low political participation of millennials. This can be seen in the many white groups of millennials (*Golput*). Some say that the irresponsible use of social media during campaigns makes it harder for politicians to get the attention of young people. This issue highlights how social media affects community engagement, especially among millennials. With the couple Bobby Nasution and Aulia Rachman in Medan Johor District as a case study, this study aims to look at the role of social media in getting more young people to vote in the Medan mayoral election in 2021. It is hoped that it can provide an overview of the factors that influence the interest and participation of millennials in politics using social media.

RESEARCH METHODS

Qualitative research with a descriptive approach was used in this study (Darwin et al., 2021). This study included four key respondents randomly selected with purposive sampling techniques (Adnyana, 2021). The criteria for being included are: a) being a local indigenous resident of Medan Johor District, as shown by a Identity Card (KTP); b) being at least 20 years old and able to communicate well; c) being willing to give information for the study's purpose, which is shown by being willing to answer questions from the source; d) follow the social media accounts of the prospective couple (Bobby Nasution and Aulia Rachman); e) have a social media account (Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, etc.); f) be active on social media daily by searching for information on regional elections > 3 times per week; and g) have a solid grasp of politics.

One respondent was selected from each village to participate in this study. Respondents came from Gedung Johor Village, Pangkalan Mahsyur Village, Suka Maju Village, and Titi Kuning Village. The COVID-19 pandemic caused many people to pull away from each other in the area, so only a few people answered the survey. Each chosen respondent is carried out directly while adhering to strict health protocols. Data collection techniques consist of an interview process, documentation, and a literature review. Interviews with speakers and direct observations on the ground were used to

determine what role social media plays in getting more young people in the Medan Johor District involved in politics. This information was given to each participant who was recruited.

All the information gathered is analyzed descriptively. The next step is data analysis, which starts with data reduction, or the selection process. It focuses on simplifying and transforming large amounts of data from records in the field about important things, like how social media can get more millennials involved in politics. In the second stage, data are presented by collecting information from the text (narrative). This information is streamlined, and the results are based on the studied variables. After studying the different parts, the conclusions drawn from the different results and sources were analyzed and mapped. These components were the role of social media, the millennial generation, and political participation.

Testing the validity of research data is done to improve the results obtained. Triangulating sources from two different sources is a way to test the reliability of the data in qualitative research. When triangulation is used as a source, the reliability of the data is checked by comparing data from different sources. Researchers looked at the data they collected and came to a conclusion. They then requested an agreement (member check) with three data sources. In this case, the author has four informants from each exit in

the villages of Gedung Johor, Pangkalan Mahsyur, Suka Maju, and Titi Kuning.

DISCUSSION

Participation of Millennials in the Medan Mayoral Election

Regional head elections are a way for the people to exercise their regional autonomy. Establishing regional head elections is a change in Indonesia's governance structure (Maharani & Nurafifah, 2020). In Indonesia, regional head elections directly result from the initial reform movement in 1998. The regional head election is the most significant democratic momentum in Indonesian life, especially as a means of implementing democracy across communities because it requires significant community involvement to be directly involved in choosing its leaders (Suyanto et al., 2016).

Like the Medan Mayoral Election, the Medan City Mayoral Election is closely watched by the whole Medan City population, particularly the six-village Medan Johor District. In the regional elections in 2020, Bobby Nasution running mate Aulia Rachman, who is carrying the number 2, is one of the candidates for mayor of Medan. The *Struggle Party*, *National Democracy (NasDem)*, *Golongan Karya (Golkar)*, *Gerindra*, and *PPP* are among the parties that support it (Nasution, 2020). Because Bobby Nasution is Mr. President Joko Widodo's son-in-law, the involvement of the community, particularly

millennials, in Bobby Nasution's political activities has sparked various opinions from the community, which has led to millennials' lack of interest in the candidate's spouse.

Several respondents stated that the current Medan City election went well, but various negative issues concerning the pair of candidates have implications for the low participation of the millennial generation, particularly in Medan City; this can be seen as many voters who were not present during the election, resulting in many votes being lost at the polling station. The low interest in candidates' spouses is a result of changes in the campaign system that was used; in the previous general elections, the campaign was carried out directly, but during the COVID-19 pandemic, the campaign was carried out through mass media, social media, and other electronic media, which was considered unattractive for millennials in Medan City.

The couple Bobby Nasution and Aulia Rahman received a negative image from millennials who believe that their participation as a pair of candidates for mayor and deputy mayor of Medan is because they are the son-in-law of Mr. President Joko Widodo, whose later all forms of policies are in favor of presidential policies and not the interests of the people in the area. Baihaqi et al., (2022) research, which revealed that the policies proposed by the prospective couple Bobby and Aulia have yet to attract millennials to the polls, the information submitted has been

informative and educational but less convincing. In addition to its importance, it shows how to make programs that impress certain groups but don't earn millennials' trust, making them less likely to participate.

Social media's role in the campaign for the mayor of Medan

Election campaigning is a coordinated effort by candidates for office to persuade people in Indonesia to gain as many votes as possible in the presidential election (Okolikj & Hooghe, 2023). An essential component of electoral activity is campaigning. Presidential candidates use several tactics, including governors, People's Representative Council, Mayor, Regents, and others, to win over the public, including peaceful convoys, open stages, donating money to build public facilities like mosques, and distributing necessities like food and clothing (Ferreira et al., 2012; Suyatno, 2016). A campaign transmits a message from the sender to the audience. These messages can be spread through various mediums, including speeches, discussions, commercials, banners, billboards, and more (Berliani Ardha, 2014; Saud et al., 2020). Social media campaigns are run in Medan, Johor, where COVID 19 is present and severely restricts all other activities.

Social media's existence makes it simpler for potential candidates to communicate with their supporters, advertise themselves, and share their vision, mission,

and program initiatives (Indrawan et al., 2021; Jandevi, 2019). Social media has evolved into a new platform for politicians to communicate with the public, establish dialogue, and spread political information (Munzir, 2019). People in Medan Johor Village, particularly millennials, believe that the social media campaign has two sides, which the first speaker claimed was crucial to Bobby Nasution's success. Bobby and Aulia's social media campaign (*Instagram*) aims at millennials to get their attention by launching *angkringan*. This must consider the urgency of community needs, and campaigns cannot attract public sympathizers, particularly millennials.

Furthermore, the need for more complete candidate profiles, experiences, and achievements on social media has made participants, especially millennials, hesitant to choose a candidate's partner because they aren't attractive. Campaigns are less effective and efficient, so less people take part. The respondents' opinions related to the role of social media for prospective spouses are more concerned with public participation in choosing candidates' spouses by announcing in various media but are not followed by policies, visions, and missions carried out and activities that will be carried out if elected. Thus, the role of social media has yet to be significantly able to attract the participation of millennials to participate in regional elections in Medan City.

The presence of social media allows people who previously knew the candidate's partner, which will lead to learning more about them, even though it will not be a direct interaction (Juditha, 2019). These two social media (*Instagram* and *Facebook*) are crucial to the candidate's success because they allow them to communicate their vision and mission as well as high-quality programs that can pique the interest of their target audience (Badaru & Adu, 2020; Komariah & Kartini, 2019).

Social media's limitations as a tool for political socialization

Social media is one of the tools that can be used to communicate the means of aspirations, including one of the campaigning media that can play a significant role in increasing participation and can play a role in victory (Lee et al., 2022; Vaccari & Valeriani, 2021). However, it is undeniable that social media as a campaign medium undoubtedly has some shortcomings, such as the low disclosure of the candidate's spouse on social media and electronic media so that the public does not know it, the display of advertisements on social media does not depict the candidate's partner but focuses on the promises that will be realized when elected, and the wrong way of disclosing results in social media is considered less practical for use for activities. The couple Bobby Nasution and Aulia Rahman only focus on *Facebook* and *Instagram* applications. However, they do not use other applications

such as *TikTok*, *Twitter*, and others, which are more popular among millennials than adults above them (Raudeliūnienė et al., 2018). Mistakes in choosing the type of information and social media users have a terrible effect on the public's loss of trust and millennials' lack of participation. Misinformation between prospective couples can lead to fights on social media, both with the public and with the opponent's partner.

Accordance with Indonesian research revealing both positive and negative effects of integrated commercial communications on voter behavior and selection. The better the way to campaign on social media, the higher the public's trust and interest in choosing candidates, so the candidate's partner must choose a sound segment (Gunarto & Hurriyati, 2020). Moreover, a study done in the UK found that campaigns that used Twitter helped win votes. Campaigning on Twitter effectively spread the word, but how people spoke was critical in changing the outcome of the election (Bright et al., 2020).

Millennials' strategies for resolving disputes on social media

During the run-up to general elections and when democratic parties are put into place, it is typical for the winner of one of the candidates' spouses to get into a fight. In general, issues arising from the allied side of candidates and opposition camps in elections are widely publicized on social media and in

the mainstream media. Related to the dispute on social media between supporters of Bobby Nasution and Aulia Rachman with other camp couples, seeking the truth, facts, and clarification from the candidate's party helps avoid false information. Besides or likewise, because the millennial generation does not trust the candidate's spouse, some respondents wanted to know if there was a problem between the two spouses of the potential regional head.

Several respondents stated that there was an identity conflict in the two candidate couples, which resulted in the trust and participation of millennials in voting tending to decrease. From a societal and political perspective, millennials handle disputes on social media by not exaggerating the problems in the media, seeking the truth related to the issue before commenting on the problems of the candidate's partner, and not planting arrogance related to the candidate's partner or opponents with disrespectful comments and criticisms (Yulianita & Zakiah, 2019).

The use of social media is evolving alongside millennials' increased political engagement

Information, service, access to political power, and space are the advantages social media has for a party and candidate pair's political activity. Social media helps explain political success, according to (Lorenz-Spreen et al., 2022; Pinho, 2023). This is because social media enables candidates to engage with

voters on a size and intensity that is impossible through conventional campaign strategies like door-to-door canvassing, pamphlets, or even print and broadcast media coverage (Dwi Putri, 2018; Putra Alamsyah et al., 2021). According to the outcomes in the field in Medan Johor, the contribution and success of social media have two opinions as to whether it has reached 100% or not.

Social Media's Contribution to Millennials' Increasing Political Participation

Millennials' increased political engagement is significantly influenced by social media, particularly in Johor's Medan District. Because one of the spouses married president Joko Widodo's son-in-law, there are differing views on whether millennials should vote in the Medan City regional head election for the Bobby Nasution-Aulia Rachman marriage. Millennial interest declines as a result, besides using the last name to look for supporters and voices. The two are developing a successful strategy with the other party's assistance. Therefore, the program's introduction was limited to millennials, but the reality is still being determined (Putri & Dwipriandi, 2021; Rahmani, 2021).

Social media does provide several advantages concerning elections and the campaign process in general. According to Saud et al. (2020) research, social media is acceptable for online political platforms and gives respondents a chance to get involved in

politics in their own country. Social media's ability to disseminate information widely has sparked an infectious phenomenon that makes every notification surveyed accessible to everyone. Social media presents numerous potentials to increase civic space, promote public conversation, and enhance citizen access to information (Christiany, n.d.; Law & Journal, 2017). This change is crucial, especially in light of the rising trend of nations clamping down on political involvement in the real world. Social media political activism encourages people to imitate political conduct, which boosts political participation offline. It can spark enthusiasm and establish the groundwork for offline political engagement, such as organizing, running for office, and casting ballots (Anderson, 2023; Maharani & Nurafifah, 2020; Mezzenzana & Peluso, 2023).

People who participate in politics through social media and online platforms. Access to unbiased information about social, economic, and political issues affecting the community or nation is more accessible thanks to online platforms. Citizens also employ naming and shame campaigns and #Hashtag Activism to raise awareness and focus on particular events and topics. By engaging in these actions, individuals draw attention to the subpar work of public authorities and force them to act (Ahmad et al., 2019; S. K. Lee et al., 2022). This promotes democratic governance and fosters public accountability.

Hence, social media—especially among millennials and in Medan—plays a significant role in social movements and current political upheavals. According to Matthes (2022) research, even though young adults use of social media has skyrocketed, and there is remarkable research evidence that social media use encourages offline political participation, the gap in voter turnout between young adults and older generations has not narrowed significantly.

The majority of students utilize social media to stay informed about politics, according to a Ahmad et al. (2019) study. Online political participation is a significant factor in political effectiveness. Social media is also a crucial forum for netizens to engage in actual political activity. The study's findings imply that political knowledge and offline political participation are substantially connected with online political action. The younger generation in Pakistan's rural areas uses social media extensively to engage in online and offline political activities. These findings show that social media significantly affects political engagement.

Referring to the findings of research on millennial involvement in politics and regional head elections, particularly in the city of Medan, it is clear that the mayoral election in Medan is not proceeding smoothly due to the abundance of information and problems that drag Bobby's partner in the wrong direction. Many respondents claimed that social media is

ineffective for politics, primarily campaigning, because of the numerous distractions brought on by the fake news extensively disseminated among politicians' wives. As a result, the quality of political news during election campaigns is less appealing to the public's hearts and minds. Public trust has dropped as a result of the poor quality of the material and the absence of the candidate's spouse's image.

According to Hamid et al. (2022) research, reputation and trust directly and significantly impact social media content quality. Through social media reputation, the quality of social media information also substantially impacts trust. However, the level of political engagement is not significantly correlated with the quality of the information. Political marketing initiatives on social media also significantly influence political engagement through trust directly and indirectly. Finally, trust significantly and favorably affects political activity. Supporting Maharani & Nurafifah (2020), findings, it was stated that social media also has detrimental effects, such as the emergence of hoaxes, post-truth, and anti-Semitic campaigns.

CONCLUSION

Social media is an essential part of the political process, including collecting aspirations and public participation among the spouses of regional head candidates. In Medan, Johor, millennials believe that using

social media as a catalyst to participate in politics tends to be less effective. The role of social media is indeed able to increase the participation of millennials, but it is not based on reality. Social media and its content are used to shape political perceptions. The role of social media in the selection of Bobby Nasution and Aulia Rachman's partner is: a) as an agent of political socialization to deliver the program to be carried out; b) for the prestige manikin of the couple Bobby Nasution and Aulia Rachman; c) as a means of online campaigning; d) as a place for the dissemination of information related to the couple Bobby Nasution and Aulia Rachman. Social media is a driver and distributor of the latest information updates from prospective couples to attract public participation and trust, especially among millennials. In the future, further studies will be needed to be related to the impact of inaccurate information on social media concerning millennial participation in politics.

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