



Digital Navigation and Fact-Checking Practices Among First-Time Voters: A Digital Ethnographic Study of Social Science Students in Bengkulu, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

The participation of first-time voters in Indonesia's 2024 General Election presents new challenges in the digital era, particularly regarding digital literacy to counter misinformation and hoaxes. This study aims to identify the digital literacy skills of students from the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences (FISIP), University of Bengkulu, in addressing political misinformation. Utilizing a digital ethnographic method with a qualitative approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis involving eight first-time voters aged 17-19 years. The findings reveal that social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter are the primary sources of political information, despite their vulnerability to hoaxes. Respondents demonstrated basic skills in identifying false information, such as fact-checking through applications and engaging in group discussions. However, they were also exposed to algorithmic echo chambers that amplify information biases. The study concludes that strong digital literacy skills can enhance responsible political participation. Strengthening digital literacy programs is essential to support the integrity of democracy.

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Submitted/Received 15 Oct 2024

First Revised 25 Dec 2024

Accepted 26 Dec 2024

Publication Date 31 Dec 2024

Keyword:

Digital literacy,
First-Time voters,
Social media,
Electoral hoaxes,
Digital ethnography.

How to cite:

Vinalti, G., Jannah, L., Ayyun, S. Q., & Kotyazhov, A. V. (2024). Digital Navigation and Fact-Checking Practices Among First-Time Voters: A Digital Ethnographic Study of Social Science Students in Bengkulu, Indonesia. *Potret Pemikiran*, 28(2), 221-235. <https://doi.org/10.30984/pp.v28i2.3227>



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1. INTRODUCTION

General elections, also known as elections, are an essential component of the democratic system and are a way for residents to elect their representatives at the national and local levels. According to media reports, young voters make up more than 60% of the vote (Fauziah et al., 2023; Ridha & Riwanda, 2020). Although there are a lot of them, the challenges for novice voters to the democratic party include the existence of the Filter Bubble and Echo Chamber, as well as the spread of fake news or disinformation on social media that is often used by novice voters, so that novice s must be able to have good digital skills. Social media is considered a powerful weapon to attract novice voters as a platform for communication with the public (Iordache et al., 2017).

Campaign strategies using social media such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Telegram, and the like are a bridge between candidates in the 2024 election and their potential constituents. According to data from BPS, the majority of Indonesians aged 25 and above have accessed the internet in the past three months, with a percentage reaching 58.63%, followed by the 19-24 age group at 14.69%. This age group, which largely consists of first-time voters, demonstrates a high level of adaptability to technology, utilizing the internet for various purposes such as communication, information, and entertainment. Even teenagers aged 16-18 (7.47%) and children aged 13-15 (6.77%) are already active internet users. This highlights the significant potential of the internet as a medium for political education and campaigns, aiming to enhance participation and political awareness among first-time voters, given their high level of digital accessibility (Rainer, 2023). This is not so much compared to the total of the entire permanent voter list, but these votes are also enough to determine the outcome of the election outcome 2018 (Palupi & Tutiasri, 2023).

Novice voter has several meanings that are currently in use. There are three categories of novice voters in Indonesia. First, rational voters choose political parties based on in-depth evaluation and analysis (Mokodompis et al., 2018). Second, voters who vote emotionally, namely voters who are still idealistic and uncompromising. Third, first-time voters, namely voters who have just entered the voting age and are voting for the first time (Ratnamulyani & Maksudi, 2018). New voters are actively using social media and making social media their primary source of information. More or less experienced voters are the most influential in voting, primarily on social media. Beginners are more likely to choose a partner who provides information on social media because it is considered interesting and approachable (Baxter & Marcella, 2017).

Several surveys show that the millennial generation and Generation Z are predicted to be the voter groups with the most significant proportion in the 2024 election. Young voters or millennial voters are voters with an age range between 17-37 years. In the 2024 simultaneous elections, the number of young voters is predicted to increase. If we reflect on the 2019 Simultaneous Elections, data from the KPU shows that the number of young voters has reached 70 million - 80 million people out of 193 million voters. This means that 35%-40% of young voters already have power and significantly influence the election results, which will later affect the nation's progress. However, another problem that can occur in the participation of young voters in

democratic parties is that they can also have the opportunity to become "golput" contributors in the 2024 election (Siberkreasi, 2023).

How could it not? Digital skills are the main module socialized by the Kominfo of the Republic of Indonesia: the ability/intelligence to use the Internet. One of them is improving novice voters' digital skills (Ridha & Riwanda, 2020). Digital proficiency is an individual's ability to use digital technologies, including the internet and digital devices, to access, understand, evaluate, and manage information effectively and communicate and participate safely and judiciously in the digital environment (Zhang & Wang, 2024). Activities in digital skills, including digital communication, managing information, and maintaining digital security, such as storing passwords and identifying suspicious content or links, are things we need to know and master (Manca et al., 2021; Rainbow et al., 2024). Social media services or channels innovatively utilize *new online* technologies to enhance intimate communication and marketing objectives (Eshet-Alkalai, 2012).

However, another challenge lies in the digital skills of novice voters who are very close to social media in obtaining information. This disruption challenge is caused by hoaxes, misinformation, disinformation, political propaganda, or widespread negative campaigns on various digital platforms, mainly social media (Kholifah et al., 2023; Mokodompis et al., 2018). Forms of manipulation of election information include hoaxes and misinformation. Hoaxes and misinformation often appear as fake news designed to mislead voters or spread misinformation about candidates, the election process, or Government policies. These hoaxes are false claims about election fraud, planned disinformation, political propaganda, black campaigns, *echo*, polarization space, difficulty verifying information, and influence on political participation.

Ideally, novice voters have been critical, independent, and dissatisfied with the establishment, pro-change about election information. This characteristic is conducive to building a community of smart voters in elections, namely voters with rational decision-making. Novice voters can come from all walks of life, but they are a group that is just exercising their right to vote for the first time. Socialization and education of novice voters in elections have been massively carried out in the Introduction to Political Science course (at FISIP) at the University of Bengkulu. Still, it is also essential to understand that novice voters' digital literacy is seen in their digital skills in accessing, understanding, and analyzing information about elections on social media. So it is interesting to study the digital skills they have acquired in addition to political education, especially FISIP students who exercised their voting rights in the February 2024 election.

Digital skills are part of digital literacy education that helps them recognize the characteristics of hoaxes. Common attributes of hoaxes they find include sensational or provocative titles that aim to attract attention and use emotional and often exaggerated language. Hoaxes also usually do not list transparent sources of information or unreliable sources. Images or videos used in hoaxes are frequently manipulated or taken outside their original context to support false claims. So that there is information chaos and information disruption.

While digital skills are part of digital literacy education that helps voters recognize hoax characteristics, there remains limited understanding of how novice voters, particularly university students in social and political sciences, apply these skills in real electoral contexts. The Introduction to Political Science course at FISIP, University of Bengkulu, has conducted extensive voter education, but questions remain about how students translate this knowledge into practical digital verification skills.

Political information disruption has seriously threatened democracy and the integrity of elections in Indonesia. This research aims to explore the digital skills of novice voters in accessing, understanding, and analyzing election information in 2024. Then, what novice voters do to face information disruption in the form of misinformation and disinformation (hoaxes) about the 2024 election. Thus, this research contributes to the form of information that will be accessed by novice voters who already have digital skills.

This study's examination of FISIP students' digital verification practices during the February 2024 election offers valuable insights into how politically educated young voters navigate electoral information. Understanding these patterns is crucial for developing targeted digital literacy programs and protecting electoral integrity in an increasingly digital democratic landscape.

2. METHODS

Type of Research

This research uses the postpositivism paradigm. Postpositivism, in its different research methods, emphasizes the discovery and proof of the theory (verification of the theory) of digital literacy initiated by Gilster (Iordache et al., 2017). Digital ethnography studies the relationship between society and the digital world (Airoldi, 2018).

Research Informant

Qualitative research is descriptive, emphasizing the inductive process, meaning, and understanding gained through words (Rofiah, 2022). The informant of this research is a FISIP University of Bengkulu student looking for political references through social media. The representation of informants in the study program at FISIP University of Bengkulu illustrates that the political knowledge obtained from the political education course is relevant to digital skills as digital natives. Informants are selected using *the purposive sampling technique*: novice voters who have exercised their right to vote in the 2024 Regional Elections or simultaneous elections. They are 17-19 years old in 2023, understand digital skills, and frequently access election content through social media. The determination of information is adjusted to the fulfillment of information obtained until the data is saturated, according to the criteria in qualitative research.

There are eight informants representing study programs at FISIP and adjusted to the informant identity (Table 1):

Table 1. Informant

Informant's Name	Age	Department
Alisa Citra Monica	19	Social Welfare
Gilang Alfaraby Reza	18	Communication Science
Novanzah	18	Public Administration
Rafiqoh Wahidah	18	Communication Science
Laila Aradhita Seprilya	19	Sosiologi
Yogi Pratama	18	Journalism
Safira Febrina	19	Sosiologi
Sahilatu Manal Z	18	Library Science

Data Collection Techniques

This study obtained data through several methods, namely observation and observing informants' activities on social media, to find informants according to the research criteria. Observations also found information that the informant activity algorithm is in election information.

Furthermore, the researcher used in-depth interviews with interview material about what social media they have and their habits of using social media, how informants understand misinformation or hoaxes, the ability of informants to distinguish false information or not, what informants do if they find hoax information, the characteristics of hoaxes about elections and what sources of information are used by informants in increasing election knowledge.

Research documentation also contributes to the results of this study. The researcher collected and digitized other findings at the time of the research, both in the form of archival photos and written captions containing information according to the study.

Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis technique in this study uses an analysis technique, namely the Miles and Huberman analysis model. Activities in qualitative data analysis are carried out interactively and occur continuously until completion so that the data is saturated. According to Miles and Huberman, qualitative data analysis has three activities: reducing data, presenting data, and drawing conclusions (Rijali, 2019; Rofiah & Burhan Bungin, 2024).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Most Accessed Social Media by Informants

The study results show that all informants use social media to gain preferences about politics, especially elections. However, the informant also knows that social media is not free from the spread of hoaxes. Informants' proximity to social media is crucial because it affects various aspects of their lives, from forming identities and opinions, access to information, and political participation to social connections and influence. Here are why informants, as novice voters, choose social media as a political reference.

Instagram provides fast, accessible, and visually appealing information; novice voters are likelier to seek election political references. Instagram allows users to follow accounts that offer political analysis, news updates, and views from different parties so they can make more intelligent choices. Additionally, social interactions on Instagram, such as comments and discussions, allow novice voters to have a more relaxed and interactive understanding of political issues.

In addition to Instagram, TikTok provides short and creative content because it emphasizes creative and entertaining short videos, which are quickly engaging and are a *new trend*. As stated by Informant Yogi Pratama in his interview:

"was looking for election politics references on TikTok because the platform offers short, creative, and easy-to-understand content. Short videos on TikTok make it entertainingly easy to get relevant and updated political information. In addition, TikTok has direct interaction features such as comments and duets, which I often use to discuss and broaden their horizons on political issues through different perspectives."

Unlike Yogi, Informant Safira argued that TikTok is a platform where hoaxes are often found. Using popular hashtags or viral trends can increase the reach of hoax videos. When hoaxes include trending hashtags, the likelihood of being seen by more people increases, accelerating the process of disseminating misinformation.

YouTube is also a social media that is often used. Informants get election issues because YouTube offers a wide variety of content; with a strong visual appeal, hoaxes presented in videos are more effective in influencing viewers than text or static images, which allows the spread of misinformation. Much educational and entertainment content is available on YouTube, making the platform fun and informative. However, Sahilatu revealed that:

"YouTube allows users to choose more content that suits their preferences through a recommendation algorithm. This creates an echoing space where viewers are only exposed to content that aligns with their views, reinforcing the spread of hoaxes, especially those related to politics."

In addition, Social Media X (formerly Twitter) is widely used by informants. The tendency of informants to obtain political opinions in real time makes them an effective tool for voicing the political preferences of individuals and organizations. Widespread text messages or tweets can influence public opinion, primarily as elections draw closer. *The hashtag feature* makes it easy for users to find trending topics and join the global conversation. Informants tend to follow accounts that share the

same political views, creating an echo space that reinforces specific hoaxes or political narratives. This can make it easier to spread disinformation because users are only exposed to a limited point of view.

WhatsApp is a social media owned by all informants. WhatsApp allows easy and fast communication, individually and in groups, which is essential for discussion and coordination. The photo, video, and document sharing feature makes it easy for informants to share important information and content. The status feature allows users to share moments temporarily, similar to stories on other platforms. The spread of information on WhatsApp is swift, especially in large groups. In the context of elections, hoaxes or disinformation can be easily spread without adequate verification (Jailobaev et al., 2021).

Activity on Social Media

The results illustrate that first-time voters are generally more familiar with technology and social media, often utilizing platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and X to search for election-related information, talk about political issues, and express their preferences. This is due to the younger generation's rapid use of digital platforms. Social media allows for quick and easy access to news, keeping up with campaigns, and interacting with candidates and political groups. As a result, novice voters become more involved in the democratic process and tend to be more active in sharing their political opinions with others. Like delivered by Informant Gilang:

"I am very active on social media because it is a fun place to express myself and find information, especially about elections. I can follow interesting political issues on platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and X, discuss with ideological friends, and even share personal views. For me, social media is not only a communication tool but also a space to feel more connected and involved in the political process in a relaxed and fun way."

The time spent by informants on social media based on interviews in this study was spent on social media for an average of 3-4 hours daily. This time is divided between various activities as described above. Here is a breakdown of the time often spent on some of the main activities:

1. Watching videos and visual content: 1-2 hours per day
2. Messaging and interacting: 30-60 minutes per day
3. Participate in trends and challenges: 30-45 minutes per day
4. Exploration and education: 30-60 minutes per day
5. Shopping online and viewing ads: 15-30 minutes per day

Informant activities on social media are not only limited to seeking information but are also very influential in determining political choices. Candidates in elections increasingly use digital platforms to campaign by presenting political messages that directly reach young audiences. Social media is an effective channel for informants to get to know candidates, listen to visions and missions, and discuss important issues. With the easy access to information and interactions that occur, social media is one of the main factors that influence the political decisions of the younger generation.

Informant's Understanding of Misinformation or Hoaxes

The digital ability of Informants to recognize misinformation or hoaxes on social media is becoming increasingly crucial in today's digital era. Informants, generally younger, are very familiar with technology and social media. They spend a lot of time on various platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Twitter, and YouTube, where they are exposed to different information that is not always true. In this context, their digital skills, especially in sorting and criticizing information, are essential to prevent the spread of hoaxes and misinformation.

Informants often have a basic understanding of how social media works and how information is disseminated. However, the main challenge is their ability to identify misinformation or misleading. Hoaxes are often designed to look credible, using images, videos, and strong narratives to grab attention. Digital literacy education plays a vital role in honing these skills. Through educational programs and awareness campaigns, novice voters can learn to verify information sources, cross-check facts, and use online fact-checking tools.

Informant's Ability to Distinguish False Information

Despite having a lot of activity on social media and being a novice voter, Cenederung Informants have good digital skills. This is evident in the interviews and images of the posts shown, as well as the digital skills of novice voters in dealing with misinformation on social media, which include a variety of skills in filtering and assessing the truth of the information they encounter. They use digital technology and social media wisely to identify and overcome hoaxes.

First, informants usually do not immediately trust the information they encounter on social media. They are more likely to double-check suspicious details by searching the Internet quickly. Using search engines, they look for reliable news sources that can verify or disprove the information. Credible news sources, such as mainstream media or fact-checking sites, are the primary reference in ensuring the validity of information. Searching to validate information is often also done by using Google.

Informants also often use fact-checking applications or sites such as Turn Back Hoax and cekfakta.com to ensure the correctness of the information. The app provides an in-depth analysis of various claims circulating on the Internet, helping novice voters get a clearer picture of the truth of the information they encounter. Digital literacy education, which is increasingly common in schools and colleges, helps them recognize the characteristics of hoaxes.

In fact-finding, informants often use their social networks to get more accurate information. They can ask friends or family who are considered to know better or have access to more reliable sources of information. Online discussion forums or social media groups that focus on a particular theme are also where they seek clarification. In an era where information can be accessed in seconds, the ability to filter and critique information is essential, and novice voters are expected to continue honing those skills to become competent and responsible digital citizens.

Informants' Efforts When Finding Hoax Information

When informants encounter hoaxes on social media, their responses can be very mixed, depending on their level of digital literacy and awareness of the importance of combating misinformation. Many novice voters who have been educated about the dangers of hoaxes will immediately take action to verify the correctness of the information. They usually start by quickly searching the Internet, using a search engine, or checking a trusted fact-checker website. Sites like FactCheck or important news portals are often references to ascertain whether the information is valid or just a hoax.

After verifying that the information is a hoax, the informant must take further steps to prevent its spread. They can report the post to social media platforms using the reporting features provided by platforms like Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter. Reporting misleading content is one effective way to help platforms review and take necessary action, such as removing content or flagging it as false information.

Meanwhile, Informants also choose a more discreet but effective approach. They are not directly involved in discussions or reporting but do not disseminate unverified information. In this way, they help stop the chain of spreading hoaxes passively. They can also use the content storage feature on social media to store information that they think is questionable so that they can review it later when they have more time or access to more complete sources of information. As Informant Alisa said:

"If I find suspicious information, such as a provocative headline, I do a fact check first. I don't just believe it, especially if it is related to important things like elections. Usually, I look for reliable sources or use fact-checking sites to ensure it is true."

Informants often have a basic understanding of how social media works and how information is disseminated. However, the main challenge is their ability to identify misinformation or misleading. Hoaxes are often designed to look credible, using images, videos, and strong narratives to grab attention. Therefore, informants have the skills to find evidence or writing styles that are emotional and provocative.

Source of Information as Election Knowledge

All informants rely on social media as the primary source of information about the election. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter have gone viral because of their ability to present information quickly and interestingly. Through social media, first-time voters can follow the official accounts of election agencies, election monitoring organizations, and political figures they trust. They also engage in political discussions and debates on this platform, allowing them to gain various perspectives on the electoral process and issues.

Young figures active in politics or social movements are also a source of inspiration and information for informants. They often follow the stories of young activists and politicians they admire to gain insight into political views and current issues. Discussions and debates on social media are also a forum for novice voters to get information directly from credible sources.

Some more active informants also participate in webinars or educational events by election organizers or non-profit organizations focusing on election literacy, such as Mafindo. At this event, they gain hands-on skills from experts and election officials and ask questions to get clarification on unclear things.

Informant's Experience of Finding Hoaxes on Social Media

As first-time voters cast their ballots for the first time in an election, the fear of discovering hoaxes is genuine and disturbing. Many of them feel enthusiastic and hope to participate in the democratic process. However, they also feel responsible for ensuring their voice is based on authentic and accurate information.

In their experience browsing social media, informants are often exposed to various information that circulates quickly. At first, they may feel confused and unsure how to tell the difference between facts and hoaxes. Misleading information often looks very convincing, with sensational headlines and compelling images, making it easy to believe.

In the 2024 election, informants faced challenges handling hoax information widely circulated on social media. For many, this is their first experience participating in the necessary democratic process, but it is also filled with confusion and concern about the validity of the information they receive.

In the 2024 election, not a few informants faced various hoaxes that were widely circulated on social media and other communication platforms. These hoaxes are designed to mislead, intimidate, or manipulate public opinion.

Gilang's informant even knows that the current form of hoaxes is rampant using artificial intelligence (AI). This phenomenon shows that hoaxes are not only dominated by text and photos but also by videos using AI, which are very difficult to distinguish. The following is a statement:

"Here are some, but many have forgotten if, in my experience, I have found fake news about the 01 passports that also use AI technology. Fortunately, I am pretty sensitive if it is a video image that uses AI and AI voice manipulation; it is seen and heard that the content is just to demonize the 01 passport, in other words, provocative so that emotions can ignite people to listen to it. It was fake news with the incident that he was scolded by the chairman of the Nasdem Party, Surya Paloh. After that, I looked for the truth of the news, and there was a clarification of Mr. AAnies' voice recording, which said that it was a voice recording with AI Technology.

In dealing with such deception (Figure 1), informants verify information through official sources, such as the General Election Commission (KPU) website and trusted news portals. This experience underscores the importance of digital literacy and the necessity of verifying the authenticity of information before sharing it further. By doing so, they help maintain the integrity of the democratic process and ensure that their electoral decisions are based on facts rather than misinformation or misleading content.

This is the fake news



Figure 1. And this is a clarification from Mr. Anies through a trusted news source: Tiktok

In addition to using fact-checking tools, informants are more active in joining communities or groups that fight hoaxes and misinformation. In this community, they share tips on recognizing hoaxes, discuss the latest trends in spreading false information, and collaborate on campaigns to improve digital literacy. They can also attend webinars or workshops by non-profit organizations or educational institutions focusing on media literacy and hoaxe eradication. Informant Rafiqoh said that:

"I am thrilled to have received digital literacy materials from Mafindo at national schools. In the training, they were taught how to verify the information received. Mafindo provided a WhatsApp number to check the facts on the 085921600500 number. It benefits me, especially during the election when there are so many hoaxes."

Digital Literacy and Novice Voters in the Context of Election Hoaxes

First-time voters, often young people with the right to vote for the first time, are at the forefront of facing the challenges of the digital age, including election hoaxes. Digital skills are essential for navigating widely circulated information and disinformation during election periods. Dealing with election hoaxes requires sound technical, critical, and media literacy skills, all of which can be analyzed through new media theory.

The New Media theory states that digital media, particularly social media, has changed how information is disseminated and received, giving users more control over what they see. This phenomenon is essential for elections, especially as novice voters increasingly access political issues through digital platforms. This study uses the theory of New Media to explain the political participation of novice voters, showing that digital media, especially social media, has changed how informants interact with politics and participate in the democratic process. The New Media theory, which considers digital media as a communication space that allows for broader and interactive participation, is particularly relevant in this context. Voters who are just learning to use digital technology and platforms now have more opportunities to engage in discussions, participate in political campaigns, and voice their political opinions (Muthomi & Thurmaier, 2024; Ramdani et al., 2024)

This research shows that novice voters are adept at using technology to access, filter, and utilize election-related information. They do not rely solely on information from a single source but actively seek different perspectives through various platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and X. This is not much different from the results of the research (Nugrahajati et al., 2022; Sitompul et al., 2024). These social media platforms allow novice voters to more easily interact with political parties and candidates, keep up with campaigns, and talk to friends or online communities about elections-related issues (Sitompul et al., 2024).

All informants rely on social media as their primary source of information. Platforms like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp allow quick access to the latest news and developments. However, social media's open and participatory nature also means that unverified information can spread quickly. In elections, hoaxes can include fake news about candidates, manipulation of survey results, or unfounded claims of election fraud (Nugrahajati et al., 2022). Digital skills are essential to meet these challenges. Perception and user experience are also the reasons novice voters are inactive on Facebook, for example, taking into account demographic factors.

Informants' ability to deal with election hoaxes can be analyzed through several aspects of the digital skills they need. First, information literacy is recognizing, searching, evaluating, and using information effectively. Novice voters must be able to identify credible sources of information and distinguish them from untrustworthy ones. For example, they should be skeptical of news from unknown websites or do not have a good reputation for accurate news reporting.

Second, the ability to verify facts is essential. Novice voters should get used to using fact-checking tools like Turn Back Hoax or cekfakta.com. These tools provide in-depth analysis and verification of claims circulating in the media. In elections, novice voters can use this tool to check the veracity of claims made about candidates or the election process.

Third, critical skills in assessing information are also needed. Informants can analyze the content of the information by considering who published the data, the purpose behind the dissemination of the information, and whether there are any specific biases or agendas that could affect the information. For example, a news story about a candidate is only found on partisan websites or social media without support from reputable news sources. In this case, informants must be more vigilant about the truth.

The new media theory also highlights the importance of interactivity and participation in media consumption and production. Novice voters are not only passive consumers but also producers of information. They often share information, opinions, and content about elections on social media. In this context, their digital skills include ethical responsibility in disseminating information. First-time voters must ensure that they do not participate in spreading hoaxes or information that has not been verified to be true.

Informants are usually proficient in using various digital platforms, such as Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and WhatsApp, often the main channel for spreading information, including hoaxes. Their digital prowess allows them to take advantage

of the various features provided by the platform, such as user reports, related searches, and warning signs that the platform is pinning on dubious content. For example, when they see sensational news, they can do a quick search on search engines to verify the veracity of information from more credible sources.

In addition, informants also learn to use digital tools such as fact-checking applications or websites that often provide in-depth analysis of claims spread across the Internet. Applications such as *turnback hoax.id* and *Check Fakta.com* can be a reference to ensure the validity of the information they receive. They also often follow trusted media accounts or influencers known for their information integrity to get guidance on the news circulating. However, the one that is easier and more accessible for them to use is Google.

However, behind digital capabilities, there is a significant problem associated with data filtering. Novice voters are often exposed to unverified content, and while they are adept at seeking information, not all of them know how to distinguish between hoaxes and disinformation. In the new media theory, this is reminiscent of the idea of a balloon filter; Social media algorithms often suggest content based on user preferences, creating an echo space that supports the perspective but does not allow for more objective information. In addition to analyzing media and political literacy, this study also shows the importance of digital literacy in improving the quality of political participation of novice voters. Skills to verify information, understand how algorithms work, and recognize hoaxes are essential skills that the younger generation must have to participate effectively and responsibly in the political process (Ridha & Riwanda, 2020).

In addition, since social media and digital platforms allow different types of communication and data to merge into a single space, the theory of media convergence is also relevant here. Novice selectors can access content in various formats, including images, videos, articles, and text messages, which can be customized to their preferences. This allows them to consolidate their political knowledge more personally and flexibly.

Overall, the theory of new media has been successfully analyzed to understand how novice voters use their digital abilities to access election messages or issues. With the growing development of social media and technology, these young voters can access and criticize information effectively to ensure more informative and active political participation.

4. CONCLUSION

This study highlights the critical importance of digital literacy for first-time voters in Indonesia's 2024 General Election. Social media serves as the primary platform for accessing political information, yet its susceptibility to misinformation and hoaxes underscores the urgent need for enhanced digital literacy skills. Findings reveal that while first-time voters possess basic competencies in verifying information, social media algorithms' echo chambers often limit their exposure to diverse perspectives. Additionally, the use of fact-checking tools such as *Turn Back Hoax* and group discussions emerged as key strategies to combat hoaxes. The study underscores

the necessity of more intensive digital literacy education, particularly for first-time voters, to encourage more rational and responsible political participation. In the context of an evolving digital democracy, these skills not only help individuals make informed decisions but also safeguard the integrity of elections against the threat of misinformation. Therefore, investing in digital literacy programs benefits not only first-time voters but also strengthens the democratic process as a whole.

5. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Thank you for financing this research from the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, University of Bengkulu, in 2024, the Institute for Research and Community Service (LPPM) of the University of Bengkulu and Moscow State University of Technologies and Management, Moscow. All informants and enumerators of the study expressed their high appreciation.

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