

Analysis of Max Weber's Perspective on the Dynamics of First-Time Voter Participation in the 2024 Presidential Election (A Case Study on Students of the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Slamet Riyadi University)



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ABSTRACT: The presidential election is a significant political event in Indonesia that involves all voters, including young voters. Students, as first-time voters, play an essential role in casting their votes in the presidential election. However, research on the profiles and factors influencing first-time student voters' decisions remains limited. This study analyzes the dynamics of first-time voters' participation in the 2024 Presidential Election using Max Weber's social action theory. Employing a qualitative approach, the study focuses on students from the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Slamet Riyadi University (UNISRI), as the research subjects. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, non-participant observation, and document studies. The main findings reveal that emotional and value-oriented actions dominate the political participation of first-time voters. Social media significantly shapes emotional narratives and issues relevant to the younger generation, while the campus environment fosters rational-instrumental actions through critical discussions. Family traditions also play a crucial role in shaping the political decisions of first-time voters. The implications of this study highlight the importance of social media-based political education to enhance critical and value-driven political participation.

KEYWORDS- Political Participation, First-Time Voters, Social Action Theory, Max Weber, UNISRI FISIP

I. INTRODUCTION

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Democracy is a political system that is highly desired, particularly by individuals with political awareness who aim to embody it in their daily actions (Lestari & Arumsari, 2018). Democracy provides equal rights for individuals to vote and contribute to determining leaders and government policies. According to Dedi (2021), many countries around the world adopt democracy to govern their administrations. Indonesia is one such country where democracy is regarded as an ideal and proud system. It highly respects the people by offering opportunities to participate in public policymaking, express opinions, and establish organizations that contribute positively and do not harm society (Lestari & Arumsari, 2018).

Political participation refers to the activities of ordinary citizens in influencing the formulation and implementation of public policies and in determining government leadership (Azzuhri et al., 2022). These activities include expressing aspirations, fulfilling tax obligations, providing input or criticism, implementing policies, and evaluating public policy execution. Additionally, they encompass supporting or opposing certain candidates, proposing alternative leaders, and participating in elections to choose representatives. In this regard, political parties play a role in providing opportunities, encouraging, and inviting members and other citizens to use political parties as a medium to influence political processes. In other words, political parties function as the primary vehicle for political participation, a role that becomes more prominent in political systems prioritizing citizen compliance over independent activities.

The 2024 Presidential Election represents a significant milestone in Indonesia's democratic history. With first-time voters comprising approximately 25% of the total electorate, the role of the younger generation is strategically important in shaping the national political direction. Specifically, 6,000 voters are aged 17 (0.003%), 63.9 million voters are aged 18–30 (31.23%), and 42.395 million voters are aged 31–40 (20.70%). This demographic group, aged 17 to 40 years, dominates the voter population, accounting for 106,358,447 young voters or about 52% of the total electorate.

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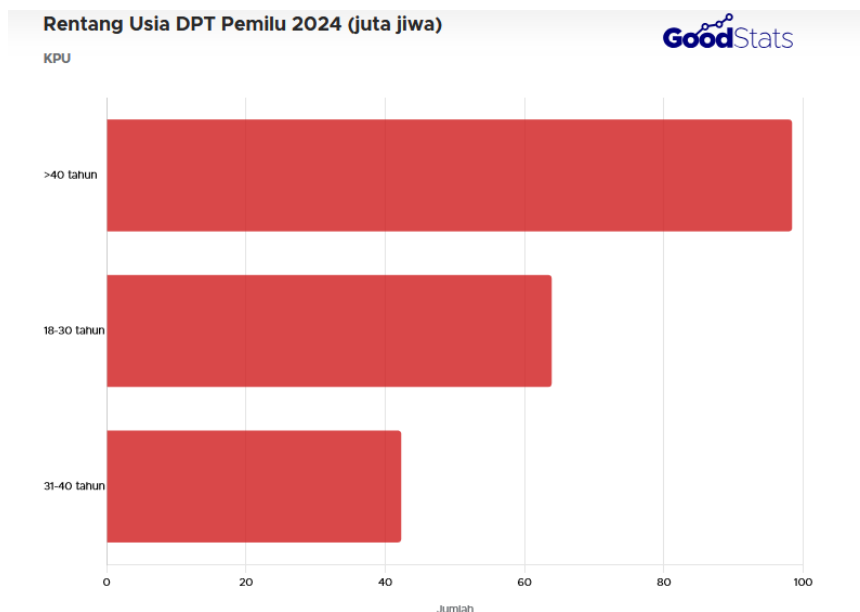


Figure 1. Total Number of Registered Voters for the 2024 Election
Source: GoodStats (2024)

According to Article 1, Paragraph (22) of Law No. 10 of 2008, voters are Indonesian citizens aged 17 or older or those who are married. Furthermore, Article 19, Paragraphs (1 and 2), states that voting rights are granted to Indonesian citizens who are registered on the voter list by the election organizers and who are aged 17 or older or married on election day. Based on this definition, first-time voters are Indonesian citizens registered on the voter list by election organizers.

Firmanzah in Pardana (2023) highlights that first-time voters receive special attention from election organizers. First-time voters generally comprise individuals participating in elections for the first time. This is because they have recently acquired their National Identity Card (KTP), a primary requirement for voting. Consequently, first-time voters are often deemed less competent due to their limited political knowledge, considered insufficient compared to more mature and experienced voters.

University students, as part of the younger generation, possess significant potential to influence election outcomes. However, their participation often encounters obstacles, such as limited political understanding, familial traditions, apathy, and the influence of social media on their political preferences. As noted by Muhammad et al. in Mahyudin et al. (2022), efforts to enhance participation, political understanding, and awareness are carried out by election organizers, political participants, and academics, particularly universities, through the implementation of the Tri Dharma Perguruan Tinggi. One effective approach is through political education, a critical issue in fostering political awareness within society.

Previous studies, such as those by Verba, Nie, and Kim (1978), emphasize the importance of political equality and mobilization in increasing youth voter participation. Additionally, Plutzer (2002) found that first-time voter participation tends to depend on habits shaped by their social and educational environment. As a theoretical framework, Max Weber's theory of social action (1922) offers a comprehensive perspective for understanding the motivations of first-time voters. Weber classifies social actions into four categories: traditional actions, emotional actions, value-oriented actions, and instrumental rational actions. This approach enables an in-depth analysis of students' motivations, whether influenced by family traditions, personal values, or pragmatic considerations such as educational policies and social stability.

This study differs from previous research by integrating Max Weber's theory of social action to analyze the dynamics of first-time voter participation, specifically among university students. The qualitative approach employed provides a profound understanding of the sociological and psychological dimensions of their actions, an area that has been underexplored in electoral studies in Indonesia. Therefore, this study examines the dynamics of first-time voter participation through Max Weber's perspective to comprehend their motivations and actions in the political process. The primary objective is to analyze the participation level of first-time student voters, understand the motives behind their actions, and offer strategic recommendations to enhance youth political participation in the democratic process.

II. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method to analyze the dynamics of first-time voter participation in the 2024 presidential election, especially among students of the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences (FISIP) of Slamet Riyadi University (UNISRI). This method was chosen because it allows researchers to explore in depth complex socio-political phenomena by referring to the perspective of Max Weber's authority theory. Then for the main materials in this study consist of

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two main sources, namely: Primary Data, data obtained through semi-structured interviews with FISIP UNISRI students who meet the criteria as first-time voters. Interviews are designed to explore their views, motivations, and experiences of political participation.; and Secondary Data, this data includes official documents, election reports, and relevant literature, including academic journals, books, and articles that support the analysis of Max Weber's theory in the context of political participation.

The data collection method is carried out through 3 types, namely: In-depth interviews, Interviews were conducted with 15 informants selected by purposive sampling to represent variations in student characteristics, such as gender, socio-economic background, and organizational experience.; Non-participatory observation: Researchers observe campaign activities or political discussions involving students to understand the social context of their participation.; and Document study: Reviewing reports, survey results, and election data related to the participation of new voters in Indonesia. Furthermore, data analysis is carried out using thematic analysis techniques with the following steps: Data Reduction, organizing data from interviews, observations, and documents into main themes based on the concepts of traditional, charismatic, and rational-legal authority from Max Weber.; Data Presentation, reduced data is presented in narrative and tabular form to facilitate interpretation.; and Conclusion Drawing, conclusions are made based on the identified patterns of new voter participation and their relevance to Max Weber's theory.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study focuses on the dynamics of first-time voter participation in the 2024 Presidential Election using Max Weber's theory of social action (1922). In-depth interviews with 15 purposively sampled informants and non-participatory observations of political campaigns and discussions provided a rich understanding of the social context and motivations of first-time voters. Weber's theory of social action served as the analytical framework, categorizing actions into four main types: traditional action, affective action, value-oriented action, and instrumental rational action. Additionally, observations of online media coverage regarding first-time voters in the 2024 election offered comprehensive insights into the application of this theory in practice.

1. Traditional Action

Several informants displayed a tendency to vote based on family traditions or community habits. Voters in this category often lacked critical engagement with candidates' platforms, choosing instead candidates aligned with family values. Traditional action was evident among first-time voters who followed their family's or community's political preferences uncritically. Observations revealed that media reports frequently highlighted the family's role as a primary influence on first-time voters' political choices. For instance, DetikNews (2024) emphasized that families play a fundamental role in shaping political attitudes, especially in rural areas where traditional values remain strong.

2. Affective Action

Many informants cited emotions, such as hope for change or dissatisfaction with current conditions, as key factors in their decision-making. Political campaigns that appealed to emotions through inspiring narratives or candidates' personal stories were particularly effective in capturing first-time voters' attention. Affective action was also apparent in voters' responses to charismatic political figures, who often leveraged emotional narratives via social media. As highlighted by DetikNews (2024), "Massive social media campaigns are a cutting-edge tool to target voters, particularly given that 60.4% of Indonesians were active social media users in 2023." Platforms like X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook provided spaces for disseminating party agendas in an engaging and informative manner, significantly influencing young voters.

This study identifies charismatic authority as a significant influence on first-time voters, aligning with Weber's theory that such authority stems from a belief in a leader's extraordinary qualities. UNISRI students, as first-time voters, were particularly drawn to charismatic leaders adept at social media communication. Their limited political experience made them more susceptible to emotional narratives than rational analysis.

3. Value-Oriented Action

Informants actively involved in student organizations tended to vote based on values they upheld, such as social justice, equality, and community empowerment. These voters were more likely to support candidates with track records reflecting these values. In this category, moral or ideological principles guided voting behavior. Observations of online media indicated that issues such as social justice, education, and environmental sustainability were central themes attracting young voters. For instance, DetikNews (2024) reported that "young voters are more inclined toward issues like employment, education, welfare, healthcare, and climate change, which they expect to be prioritized by political parties." Candidates emphasizing sustainability initiatives gained significant attention from this demographic.

4. Instrumental Rational Action

A smaller group of informants carefully analyzed candidates' programs before making their decisions. These voters typically had better access to information and were capable of evaluating the potential impact of policies on their futures. Instrumental rational action characterized voters who made decisions based on practical considerations, such as direct benefits from proposed policies. According to Tirto.id (2024), young voters are encouraged to be critical and rational, rejecting negative practices such as disinformation, money politics, and identity politics. Furthermore, first-time voters are expected to actively contribute to anti-

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corruption efforts and reject candidates lacking integrity. This suggests that well-informed young voters tend to evaluate candidates' platforms more rationally.

On the other hand, the campus environment also plays a significant role in shaping the critical and rational thinking of first-time voters. Academic discussions, seminars, and student organization activities provide young voters with opportunities to analyze political issues more deeply. In this context, instrumental rational action becomes more dominant, particularly among students who have extensive access to information and the ability to evaluate candidates' programs based on their societal impact. For instance, students tend to consider policies related to education, environmental sustainability, and employment when making political decisions. Campuses can further contribute by offering open political discussion forums, enabling students to understand their role in the democratic process more comprehensively.

The findings highlight the relevance of Max Weber's social action theory in understanding first-time voter participation. Emotional and value-oriented actions dominated the political engagement of young voters, with social media serving as a primary medium amplifying emotional narratives through viral content. However, campus environments showed potential for fostering instrumental rational actions through critical discussions. This underscores the need for more strategic political education initiatives, utilizing social media as a structured educational tool.

Social-economic inequality also influences the dynamics of first-time voter participation. Voters from low-income backgrounds tend to be more vulnerable to the influence of family traditions or practices like vote-buying compared to those with better access to education and information. This indicates that traditional actions are more dominant in this group. On the other hand, voters with better access to education tend to take rational or value-oriented actions. In the context of Weber's theory, this difference illustrates how an individual's social actions can be influenced by the social structure they belong to. Addressing this inequality requires interventions focused on the equal distribution of political education, both through social media and community-based activities, so that every voter, regardless of their background, can participate in the political process equally.

This study aligns with previous research, such as Azkiya et al. (2023), which noted social media's transformative role in political participation. Social media enables effortless engagement, though it also has ambivalent effects on youth political participation. Similarly, findings support Sururi (2024), who demonstrated the significant role of political education in enhancing the participation and integrity of first-time voters. Improved political education correlates with increased active participation and a stronger commitment to democratic values.

IV. CONCLUSION

This research provides a deep understanding of the dynamics of first-time voter participation in the 2024 Presidential Election using Max Weber's theory of social action. The research findings show that emotional actions and value-oriented actions dominate the motivations of first-time voters. Social media plays a significant role in shaping political participation by spreading emotional narratives and issues relevant to the younger generation. However, the campus environment also proves to have the potential to encourage rational instrumental actions through critical and structured discussions. Family remains a significant traditional influence, while emotions and moral values are the main drivers of the political participation of the younger generation. This phenomenon reflects the relevance of Weber's theory in understanding social motivation patterns in the digital era.

The implications of these findings are the need for a strategic approach in political education that utilizes social media as an effective educational tool. This approach is expected to increase rational political awareness among young voters, so that they are not only influenced by emotions but are also able to make political decisions based on values and rationality. Additionally, the integration of formal education in universities and social media campaigns is crucial in building a more critical and independent generation of voters.

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