

Digital Democracy: The Evolution of Indonesia Electoral Politics

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ABSTRACT

The digital age is ushering in transformative changes in the electoral political landscape around the world. Including Indonesia, as a dynamic democracy, is also a country that cannot avoid this change. The collaboration between advances in digital technology and politics has reshaped how election campaigns are run, information is disseminated, and Indonesian citizens engage with the democratic process. This article examines the challenges and opportunities arising from the integration of digital technology in the democratic order in this case elections in Indonesia. The purpose of this study is to analyze the impact of the evolution of *digital democracy* on the electoral process in Indonesia, from voter outreach and campaign strategies to how to maintain democratic integrity. This research draws on a comprehensive review of the existing literature, combined with an analysis of democratic processes in Indonesia. Qualitative and quantitative data are used to illustrate the changing nature of electoral politics in Indonesia's digital era. This article shows that *digital democracy* in terms of electoral evolution will be inevitable and will continue to develop along with the times, Indonesia is an affected country. This is evidenced by how digital technology has democratized political participation in Indonesia, encouraging increased citizen engagement and challenges and opportunities.

Keywords: Digital Democracy, Indonesia Election, Evolution

INTRODUCTION

The era of the great digital shift has been experienced by the whole world, this era comes from the dominance of technology, including democracy is also the object of change, even around the world. The conduct of political campaigns, the dissemination of information, and citizen engagement in the democratic process have changed significantly as a result of the development of digital technology (Sykri et al., 2023). This phenomenon created what is now known as *digital democracy*, which highlights how digital technologies collaborate closely with politics (Alami et al., 2022). The Internet and social media, as essential components in this transformation, have provided platforms that enable the participation of individuals and groups that previously might have been overlooked in politics (Eneome et al., 2023). In various electoral processes around the world, including the US presidential election (Wang,

2022) and the Brexit referendum (Floridi 2016), the influence of digital technology on election results and public opinion is increasingly in the spotlight. In the midst of this global dynamic, Indonesia, as one of the largest democratic countries in the world is also feeling the great impact of this change (Alami et al., 2021). The use of digital technology in electoral politics has become an integral part of Indonesia's democratic system, with significant impacts on how political campaigns are run (Masduki, 2021), how citizen participation increases (Mærøe et al., 2021), and how local and national political dynamics change more openly (Slater, 2018). Indonesia, with its large and growing internet user base, has seen a significant increase in *digital democracy*. Use of social media platforms such as Facebook (Kim et al., 2018), Twitter (Davis et al., 2016; Eneome et al., 2023; Syukri et al., 2023), and Instagram 's breadth has become an important means of sharing political information, election campaigns, and other processes (Prihatini, 2020).

The role of digitalization in increasing voter participation in Indonesia has become increasingly significant in electoral politics in the last 4 editions of general elections. With the rapid and widespread increase in internet access across the country, more Indonesians have the opportunity to engage in the political process. In addition, social media has given citizens a platform to participate in political discussions (Kim et al., 2018), support political candidates (Aspinall, 2017), and mobilize support for political initiatives (Berenschot, 2020). *Digital democracy* also enables political candidates and political parties to reach voters more effectively through online campaigns and online political advertisements. Although digitalization has opened the door to increased voter participation, challenges such as disinformation and data protection are also a concern.

Close cooperation between digital technology and politics has formed a new foundation, including in the way election campaigns are run (Alami et al., 2021). Digital technology has opened up new opportunities to reach voters and gain support in ways that were not possible before. Candidates and political parties now rely on social media platforms, digital campaign tools, and data analytics to identify potential voters, communicate campaign messages, and organize election activities. In this increasingly connected world, political campaigns have become increasingly fragmented, with messages and information tailored for diverse audiences. In addition, digital technology also allows direct involvement of citizens in the campaign process, such as fundraising through *crowdfunding platforms* (Baber et al., 2022) and organizing voluntary campaigns (Buente, 2015).

While technology has opened the door to wider participation in politics and also brings significant challenges. Disinformation, or fake news, is rampant on social media and can influence public perception of political and electoral issues (van Dijck, 2020). Political digitalization in Indonesia also brings a number of side effects, among which is sharply increasing polarization. The ease with which political views are

disseminated through social media often results in sharp and harsh distinctions between political groups (Lim, 2017). Voters tend to be exposed to information that supports their own views, creating information bubbles that reinforce pre-existing beliefs and ignore differing views. This can exacerbate political tensions, hinder constructive dialogue, and hinder the ability to reach political agreement (Aspinall & Mietzner, 2019). With the widespread use of digital technology, issues of polarization and political extremism are becoming a major concern, requiring efforts to promote interparty dialogue and mitigate polarization in the context of an increasingly digitally connected Indonesian politics. In addition, the issue of privacy and data security is also a major issue in digital electoral politics. Cyber threats, including attempts at foreign interference in elections, have also sparked serious concerns (Whyte, 2020). However, according to Lim (2017), at the same time, technology also brings new opportunities, such as wider voter outreach and more efficient campaign methods.

The digital evolution of the electoral process in Indonesia is the object of this study. The development of digital technology has covered almost all aspects of elections, from campaign strategies (Kim et al., 2018) to voter participation (Wang, 2022) which in terms also requires precise and accurate evaluation (Eneome et al., 2023). Time and cost effectiveness can be reduced if optimally utilizing the ease of this digital method. Involving a comprehensive analysis of changes in electoral politics in the digital age, this study aims to provide a deeper understanding of how this evolution affects the electoral process in Indonesia. Through a scientific approach, this research also identifies emerging challenges and opportunities, and provides a framework to address these impacts in the context of democracy in Indonesia. The rapid development of digital technology that influences electoral politics makes this research very important. The research also provides a scientific basis for policymaking to maintain electoral integrity and encourage citizen participation in politics. Therefore, this study will analyze *digital democracy* issues, including how digital technology affects voter participation in elections in Indonesia, as well as the extent to which the use of social media and digital technology has contributed to increased political participation in Indonesia. This research will explore the impact and implications of *digital democracy* in the Indonesian context, highlighting significant changes in the country's electoral politics.

Literature Review

Increasingly close cooperation between digital technology and politics has shaped the electoral landscape in Indonesia, with impact growing sustainably. This study aims to analyze these changes and identify challenges and opportunities that arise as a result of the integration of digital technology in the electoral process in Indonesia. *Digital democracy* is a key idea in understanding electoral politics in the digital age. *Digital democracy* uses technology to increase political engagement,

access to information, and direct and informed citizen participation in the democratic process (Alami et al., 2022). As key objects in this transition, the internet and social media have given people a voice that is never listened to in politics (Prihatini, 2020). They have also made election campaigns more open and honest, allowing candidates and parties to reach voters directly. Eli Pariser explores how social media algorithms can amplify political views in a country and how they affect elections (Pariser, 2011).

Several studies have been conducted to investigate the impact that digital technology has had on political politics. The research conducted by Merlyna Lim (2017) noted how social media has become the primary venue for political campaigns in a number of nations, including Indonesia. According to findings published by Fanida et al. (2020) there has been an upsurge in political participation and citizen engagement in Indonesia since the introduction of the internet. One of the sources of literature exploring the impact of digital technologies on citizen engagement in electoral process. It explains how digital developments have affected the dynamics of participation in the context of the EU, and it is one of the books that is included in this source of literature (Hamulák et al., 2023). The research significantly explains that digitalization in elections has a very positive impact. However, the impact of digital technology in electoral politics has also posed challenges, including the spread of fake news (van Dijck, 2020) and privacy issues (Whyte, 2020). This research will consider the extent to which digital technology has influenced electoral politics in Indonesia, focusing on the challenges and opportunities that exist.

Social media is one of the platforms that play a role in election campaigns, political communication, and its influence on voter preferences (Davis et al., 2016). In some cases of elections in various countries, Twitter has become the most influential social media in global electoral politics. Online political advertising has become an important instrument in campaign strategy (Houser et al., 2011). In addition, the use of social media in election campaigns can influence voters' perceptions of candidates and election issues (Dimitrova, 2011). However, digital campaigns also bring challenges in terms of accountability and transparency. This research will explain how digital technology has shaped election campaigns in Indonesia, drawing on empirical evidence and existing literature findings.

The influence of online campaigns on voter preferences has become an increasing focus of research in relation to *digital democracy*. Digitalization gives consideration to how social media and online political communication have influenced voters by presenting political campaign information and messages (Vaccari et al., 2015). According to Nobility *et al.* (2022) also stated that digital campaigns in the 2019 general election in Indonesia influenced voter behavior, including participation in elections and voter preferences (Megasari et al., 2022). In the context of elections in Indonesia, this study provides important insights into how online campaigns affect voter preferences and participation in the political process. Overall, this literature

illustrates the importance of online campaigns in shaping voter preferences and influencing political participation in the era of *digital democracy*.

METHOD

This study uses comprehensive literature analysis and qualitative and quantitative data collection. Deep literary analysis provides a theoretical foundation for comprehending global electoral politics and digitalization's impact on democracy. Literature analysis delivers vital research literature by examining academic papers, research reports, books, and related media pieces.

Qualitative data helps this research understand political actors, voters, and electoral politics. Qualitative data collection shows how digital technology has affected political relationships, individual opinions, and campaign strategy. Research can examine subjective dimensions of democratic transformation in Indonesia, especially elections, with this in-depth methodology.

However, quantitative data show political politics trends more broadly. The study supports its findings and identifies trends by using 2004–2019 data on rising voting participation. A solid foundation of literature analysis, qualitative data, and quantitative data allows this research to draw complete and reliable findings concerning digitalization's impact on Indonesian political politics. This research can illuminate digital electoral politics with its balanced methodological approach.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Digital Democracy

The introduction of *digital democracy* has resulted in significant shifts in the structure of international politics. *Digital democracy*, also known as e-democracy or internet democracy, is the use of digital technologies and the internet to improve democratic processes and governance. Some examples of *digital democracy* include online voting, citizen engagement through social media, open government data, crowdsourcing, and e-government services. *Digital democracy* also goes by the name's internet democracy and e-democracy (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2010). This encourages transparency, encourages citizen participation, and simplifies access to government information and services. On the other hand, this raises a number of issues, such as a lack of digital inclusion, concerns about online safety, and the need for legislation to counteract the spread of false information. Using technology as a tool to engage citizens and improve democratic procedures is central to the concept of *digital democracy*, which seeks to make governments more responsive and accountable in an environment where the digital landscape is constantly changing. In *digital democracy*, technology and politics often work together. The equalization of internet access across all provinces in Indonesia has contributed to the trend of

collaboration between technology and politics. There are approximately 5.19 billion internet users worldwide (Statista, 2013), Indonesia is the country with the 4th largest internet users in the world after China, India, and the United States. Internet users in Indonesia reached 212.9 million out of 278 million Indonesians, meaning that around 66.48 percent of Indonesia's population has used the internet (BPS, 2022). These data support the development of the digitalization climate in various sectors including democracy. Therefore, it is necessary to discuss the implications of the evolution of *digital democracy* in Indonesia, especially in direct elections, including the following:

1. Increased Voter Participation

Increased voter participation in elections in Indonesia, attributed to the influence of *digital democracy*, is a noteworthy phenomenon in modern political studies. This increase occurred in the general election in Indonesia, even this increase is very significant. Below is a graph of the increase in electoral participation in Indonesia in 2004-2019.

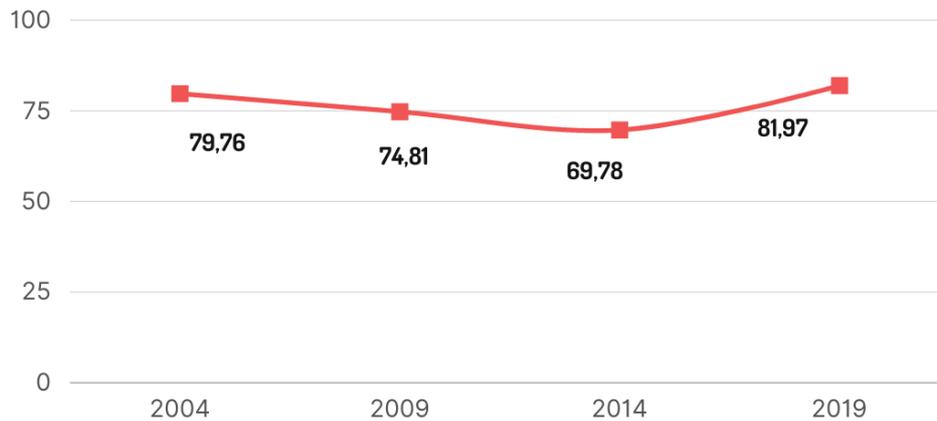


Figure 1. Percentage of Voter Participation Rate in General Elections (2004-2019)

Source: Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS, 2022)

The data above explains that there has been a downward trend in voters in Indonesia since the general election took place, from the general election in 2019 provides a clear picture of this increase. In the election, the voter turnout reached 81.97 percent, which proves a significant increase when compared to the previous election. In comparison, in the 2014 election, the voter turnout was only around 69.78 percent. In the previous two editions of the election, election participation in Indonesia decreased, but increased dramatically during the 2019 general election. This confirms a marked increase in voter participation, which can be considered as a result of the development of *digital democracy*. This increase in voter participation is related to the use of social media and online platforms in political contestation.

2. Change in Campaign Strategy

The rapid development of digitalization in Indonesia has an impact on changing the way a person campaigns, one of which is utilizing social media. The role of social media in political campaigns has become a significant phenomenon over the past two decades. In the book *the hybrid media system: Politics and Power* by Andrew Chadwick says that social media and digital technology have changed the political landscape by giving people greater access to participate in the political process. This creates the potential to increase voter participation. In the Indonesian context, this becomes even more important during the general elections that take place from 2004 to 2024. Social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and other platforms, have changed the way political campaigns are run and how political messages are disseminated to voters. Social media is the easiest alternative in campaigning and wider coverage at every level of society. The following reasons explain why social media is so effective in political campaigns.

First, social media provides an avenue for candidates and political parties to interact directly with voters (Eneome et al., 2023). They can leverage the platform to post campaign messages, upload photos and videos, and respond to questions and comments from voters. These interactions create a closer relationship between voters and candidates, which can form emotional bonds and gain stronger support (Dimitrova et al., 2014).

Second, social media provides an opportunity for political campaigns to spread political messages more widely and quickly. Social media account owners can easily share campaign content to their networks, which can then go viral and reach a larger audience (Eneome et al., 2023; Taylor & Gibson, 2017). As a result, campaign messages can reach potential voters who may have previously been difficult to reach.

Third, social media also plays a role in mobilizing voters (Eneome et al., 2017). Political campaigns use these platforms to encourage voters to vote and participate in the electoral process. By holding online campaign events, offering information about polling places, and reminding voters about election dates, social media helps in ensuring that voters fulfill their obligations in elections.

In the context of *digital democracy*, social media has become a powerful tool in garnering voter participation. This confirms that the development of *digital democracy* has contributed to increased voter participation in Indonesia, creating a more inclusive and participatory political environment (Karmila et al., 20121). In the global context, this phenomenon is not only limited to Indonesia. Increased voter participation driven by digital technology has been a theme that has gained attention around the world. The development of social media in Indonesia is also a determining factor. With the development of social media, voters have easier access and wider political information, which has the effect of increasing voter participation who are more active in elections (Dimitrova et al., 2014). However, it also raises issues such

as the spread of false information (Dimitrova et al., 2014) and political polarization (Aspinall & Mietzner, 2019) which must be addressed and managed wisely to preserve the integrity of democracy. These issues demonstrate the importance of effective regulation, digital literacy, and shared responsibility in ensuring that social media can continue to be a useful tool in increasing political participation without undermining the democratic process itself. Over time, the role of social media in politics will continue to evolve, and it is important to continue to monitor these developments to maintain the right balance between open participation and democratic security.

3. Political Education

Political education conducted online has become an important element in the context of *digital democracy*, especially in an effort to increase voter participation and understand citizens about the political process (Prabowo et al., 2020). Online political education includes a series of initiatives aimed at providing an understanding of the political system, elections, and rights and obligations as citizens through online platforms. The role of government, NGOs, media, and others determines that this political education is conveyed to the community. Online political education makes it easy for citizens to access political information easily and quickly. They can access political news, policy analysis, and election data with just a few clicks, which helps them understand relevant political issues and make more informed decisions (Prabowo et al., 2020; Yasnita et al., 2020). Online political education can also give citizens access to more complete political education resources, including election guides, educational videos, and interactive platforms that allow them to participate in election simulations. This helps improve citizens' understanding of the electoral process and how to get involved, as well as more carefully select news to avoid disinformation or hoaxes.

4. Information Equity

The development of digital platforms has significantly increased the availability of political information (van Dijck, 2020) thus emerging as an important factor in driving electoral political transformation in the contemporary digital age. The emergence of digital technology and *digital democracy* has facilitated easy access for Indonesians to obtain political news, policy assessments, and election data through online news portals, social media platforms, and other digital sources. The increased accessibility offered by this expedited and simplified means facilitates a more comprehensive understanding of related political issues, facilitates the guidance of the electoral process, and ensures transparency in elections through the provision of precise and reliable election statistics. In addition, increased availability of political information can impact voter participation by encouraging greater involvement in the electoral process (Wang, 2022). However, it is important to remember that prudent management of difficulties, such as the spread of misinformation and worsening political divisions, is essential in the realm of *digital democracy*.

An explanation of existing data shows a significant increase in voter participation from 2004 to 2019, with *digital democracy* playing a significant role in driving this upward trend. Several factors may explain this increase, such as the utilization of social media platforms that enable political discourse, online educational resources that increase voter knowledge, increased availability of political information through online news platforms, and the effectiveness of digital political campaigns. However, in addition to the observed increase in voter participation, it is imperative to conduct additional studies to ascertain the proper impact of *digital democracy* on this increase, as well as to thoroughly examine the cause-and-effect relationship between these variables and the increase in voter turnout. There is significant potential to investigate these dimensions in the Indonesian context to understand the real consequences of *digital democracy* on electoral procedures and voter participation. Various conveniences obtained from *digital democracy* certainly have obstacles faced, which is then one of the things that must be avoided and also campaigned not to become worse.

Challenges and Opportunities

The identification of challenges that arise along with the evolution of *digital democracy* in elections in Indonesia covers a number of aspects that need serious attention in this study. One of the main challenges is the spread of disinformation, which has become a global concern in digital politics (Muzykant & Muqsith, 2021). Indonesia is experiencing a massive spread of false information or disinformation, this can affect electoral preferences in a significant way, this happened massively in the 2019 election (Aspinall & Mietzner, 2019). Disinformation can include false information about election candidates, political campaigns, or key political issues. This can confuse voters, influence voter preferences, and affect election integrity (Aspinall & Mietzner, 2019). In addition, privacy issues are also an important challenge that arises in the context of *digital democracy*. In an era where personal data can be easily collected, disseminated, and utilized for political gain, privacy protection is becoming increasingly important (Whyte, 2020). In digital political campaigns, voters' personal data is often used to direct political ads and campaign messages. Therefore, there needs to be an effort to ensure that voters' personal data is not misused and that there are strict regulations in place to protect individual privacy.

Moreover, there is another challenge of low oversight and transparency in online political campaigns through social media. Social media can be used to spread political messages without strict controls (Lim, 2017). Therefore, it is important to ensure that online political campaigns are subject to appropriate rules and oversight, d). Foreign intervention in politics is a serious challenge that needs to be faced in the era of *digital democracy*. Cyberattacks that can damage election infrastructure and theft of voter data, along with information campaigns that seek to influence voter decisions, can threaten the integrity of elections and democracy. In an online environment, attempts at foreign intervention can happen quickly and are difficult to

detect, making dealing with these risks more complicated (Gorwa & Guilbeault, 2020). Therefore, governments and electoral institutions must improve cybersecurity, active monitoring of foreign information campaign interventions, and public awareness of the risk of foreign interference. These measures are critical in maintaining the integrity of domestic elections and political decisions in this era of *digital democracy* fraught with serious challenges.

Another challenge is the political polarization that can be amplified by social media and digital technology. In the 2019 general election, Indonesia faced great polarization, the terms *cebong* and *kampret* emerged in that political year (Aspinall & Mietzner, 2019). Social media is often a platform where voters are exposed to political views that align with their own beliefs, and this can deepen polarization in society. The spread of disinformation, privacy concerns, low surveillance and transparency in political campaigns, foreign intervention and political polarization are some of the challenges that need to be further analyzed in the context of elections in Indonesia in the era of *digital democracy*. In the face of these challenges, prudent efforts and policies are needed to preserve the integrity of democracy and ensure that elections run transparently and fairly.

Maintaining the integrity of democracy in a digital context is a challenge that requires proactive (Wong & Dobson, 2019) and collaborative action from various parties (Fung et al., 2013). The integrity of democratic processes can be threatened by the spread of false information and propaganda, which is particularly problematic in this day and age, when information can be quickly disseminated through various online platforms. Therefore, the role of governments in regulating behavior related to online campaigns and securing election infrastructure from cyberattacks is critical. In addition, electoral institutions have an obligation to ensure that voting is conducted openly and honestly in a safe environment, which will allow the general public to have confidence in the final count.

Online platforms such as social media also play an important role in maintaining the integrity of democracy. There needs to be an increase in monitoring and filtering false content, as well as collaborating with electoral agencies and governments in identifying and addressing information campaigns that seek to influence voters. In addition, civil society has a significant role in detecting and reporting disinformation, as well as in improving people's digital literacy to be more critical in assessing the information they receive.

Finally, voters themselves also have a responsibility in maintaining the integrity of democracy. By improving digital literacy and wisdom in using social media, voters can be guardians of election integrity by identifying and resisting the spread of false information and participating in the electoral process intelligently. Through strong cooperation between the government, electoral institutions (KPU and

Bawaslu), online platforms, civil society, and voters, the integrity of democracy can be well maintained in this challenging digital era.

CONCLUSION

This article comprehensively explains the evolution of digital democracy in the context of electoral politics in Indonesia. Some of the highlights are the role of digital technology, social media, online political campaigns, and online political education in shaping the country's electoral political order. It starts by identifying significant changes in electoral politics caused by the development of digital technology. This research provides a deeper understanding of how this evolution has affected the electoral process and how digital democracy has affected voter participation, political campaigns, and voter behavior patterns.

In the context of increased voter participation, this study documented a significant increase in voter turnout over the period studied (2004-2019). Our data and findings suggest that digital democracy is a key factor contributing to this increase. Increased internet access across the country and the role of social media have given citizens a greater platform to engage in electoral politics. However, challenges such as disinformation and privacy are also major focuses that need to be addressed.

Challenges in the use of digital technology in electoral politics in Indonesia include issues such as the spread of disinformation and data security. Cyber threats, as well as potential foreign interference in politics, are serious issues that must be addressed. However, the research also shows that digital technology brings new opportunities in terms of wider voter outreach and more efficient campaigns.

Our findings identify the significant impact that digital technology, social media, and online political campaigns have had on changing voter behavior patterns and increasing citizen participation in the electoral process. The implications of these changes give us a deeper understanding of how digital technologies play a role in modern elections, and highlight the challenges that need to be overcome to safeguard democratic integrity. In an increasingly digitally connected era, it is important to take wise steps to address these challenges and take advantage of the opportunities offered by digital technologies to increase voter participation and strengthen democracy in Indonesia.

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