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# The Dynamics of First time Political Interest of the First-Time Voters in Indonesia (An Analysis of First-Time Voters in Makassar)

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**Abstract.** This paper aims to show how the political preferences of the first-time voters formed. As an influencing factor of political behavior, understanding is important to understand. As one of the important segments in political dynamics, their existence is always important including in exercise their voting rights for the first time in an election event. Generally, first-time voters tended to be seen as a segment that easy to understand their political behavior tendencies since it is usually assumed under the domination of their family or parent's preferences. However, the parents dominantly saw switching where two other aspects occur. Based on research was accompanied in the city of Makassar, Indonesia, on the first-time voters towards students in several high schools, this paper aims to show how the actual role of schools, parents, social media in shaping the political preferences of the first-time voters where later affects their political attitudes tendency

**Keywords:** First-time Voters, Political Interest, Senior High School

## 1 Introduction

Democracy is an important thing due to its idea that contains values as a reference for organizing a good national and state life. The word democracy comes basically from two words, “*demos*“ which means people, and “*kratos*“ which means government. So democracy is then interpreted as people's government, or better known as the government from the people. Democracy is understood as a system that transforms people. The most important thing as an aspect of democracy goodness is its ability to keep people from being oppressed in a system of living together.

The idea of the goodness of democracy has made many countries compete to declare themselves as democratic countries (Sen 1999). The idea of democracy appears to be the best offer for a country to create

good conditions for their society. It makes democracy seen as an important indicator of political development where all people have the same right to rule and to be ruled. Thus the involvement of people is the most important aspect that determines the degree democratic system. Democracy is understood as an idea or principle that equalizes people (Dahl 1989). Thus all members of society have an equal right to participate in a political event. It implies all elements of society politically where may participate differently but still collectively as the pillars of democracy without exception, including the first-time voters.

Basically, first-time voters are one of the important segments in the context of democracy and become one of the segments that have received significant attention related to trends in political behavior (Somerville 2011). It seems closely related to the assumption that this segment is not informed well about how the political system works in a democratic context. In addition, first-time voters tend to be regarded as a community that politically has not yet acted independently in their participation.

This condition is related to the conceptualization of beginners related to the youth segment or young people. There tends to be seen in the same "space" related to the dependence and degree of independence in various aspects of life, groups, or people. In terms of democracy, their involvement is seen as playing an important role as part of the conception of the people. But at the same time, it seems inseparable from the fact that they still depend on the social context in which they are located. It means, their roles still seem to be very dependent on the space in which they express themselves. Thus, it can be said that the participation of this segment in the political space in a democratic system will be influenced by the environment and the level of independence related to its political understanding (Galstyan 2019).

The condition is to confirm why the first time-voters often gets less attention from the existing political dynamics. It is because they are still seen as the community who are not understanding politics. They are still tend to be considered still very dependent on their parents as a forming factor for their interest in politics. As a result, the behavior and political views of the younger generation, including first-time voters, are often seen as a manifestation of their parents attitudes. However, this condition seems to change, especially concerning the presence of the school process and social media as information sources of political information.

Based on research conducted on first-time voters in the city of Makassar, this paper would like to show how this segment's interest in politics was formed and imply for shaping their political understanding. This paper finally tries to show the factors forming their interest in politics after previously it deeply assumed triggered by parental preferences.

## 2 Research Method

This paper is based on the results of research conducted in the city of Makassar in the period of January to September 2020. Through a qualitative research method with a Descriptive Analysis form, this research was conducted on high school students who were included in the category of first-time voters. Informants in this study were determined from the beginning based on their categorization on school status. In this study, there were 40 informants who are active in school organizations. They were interviewed thru the in-depth interview to get the primary data that were completed with various secondary data.

## 3 Result And Discussion

Based on statutory provisions, voters are residents who are at least 17 (seventeen) years old and have not been married who are registered in the Election. In this context, the first time voters are seen as someone who has reached the age of 17 or has been married. First-time are those who will enter the voting age and will exercise their voting rights for the first time in an election. In this regard, this paper focuses on first-time voters by age.

With the election cycle in Indonesia that is held every five years, the age range for new voters is 17-25 years. Beginner voters are generally still in the high school (SMA) or equivalent and those who are currently studying at university. Early voters are an important element in the structure and dynamics of politics and democracy. They have great potential as drivers of change because they have broad horizons or horizons facing the people. Besides, their number in the voter structure is quite significant. Thus, their presence in the space for political participation is very important in supporting democratic values. This in turn calls for first-time voters a good understanding of political space and how they position themselves in it.

So far, there is a tendency that the initial political understanding of first-time voters comes from the family environment, especially from parents. This in turn encourages the assumption that the political preferences of beginners will be in line with the political preferences of their parents (See for example Hooghe and Bédescu 2007). Thus, it will be easy to understand the political preferences of first-time voters in demonstrating their political behavior. Furthermore, the trend of political behavior in this segment will also be predictable from the start. However, this trend seems to indicate a change today. This segment shows the tendency of an attempt to reject traditional ways in the context of their knowledge and participation in politics. This tends to show that there is a tendency to shift their perspective towards this model of preference formation which tends to be dominated by information and justification from parents. First-time voters seem to show symptoms of a shift in the model of preference formation towards politics. This seems to be related to the tendency of the current situation to be more open and to provide space for creativity and for them to get information while ensuring it is something that will shape their preferences. This is closely related to the development of the political education process associated with their existence.

For first-time voters who are at the high school level, their interest in politics is closely related to their initial introduction to this space. It seems begins to emerge when they have been introduced to the concept of rights and obligations as citizens, especially related to awareness of rights and obligations as citizens. They learned this from the activities they participated in at school.

As a space for learning, schools are ideal places for first-time voters to get a lot of information in an effort to build their character as part of Indonesian citizens. This is realized through a series of teaching and learning activities and extracurricular activities in schools. In terms of learning activities, one of the subjects provides an opportunity for initial awareness of citizen's rights and obligations is Civic Education (PKN). It is because Civic Education carries a mission related to the moral education aspects of the nation, forming smart, democratic, and noble citizens who consistently preserve and develop democratic ideals and build national character. Through the vision of Civic Education, this process seeks to realize the educational process that is directed at developing individual abilities, so that they become smart, participatory, and responsible citizens. Thus, it will form an Indonesian state based on *Pancasila* (Indonesian Ideology) and a positive character as an individual and a social being in a balanced manner (Azmi 2016). Through PKN, as well as additional extracurricular activities such as student organizations, learners, in this case, first-time voters, first, come into contact with basic political understandings regarding their existence as part of society. However, what is found in the PKN learning material still seems to provide an overview and has not led to an aspect that is more focused on participation in practical political space such as elections or involvement in influencing state policy. These high school students as first-time voters still need other information to encourage their interest in political dynamics and issues. This then paves the way for the influence of other sources of information such as social media.

Nowadays, social media has a significant impact on almost all people in society, including political life. Politicians use social media as an effective tool to reach potential voters with political campaign messages, while at the same time citizens use social media to access political information, and follow the latest political developments, and are involved in various processes within it (Mhlomi and Oluyinka 2017). This shows the

importance of social media existence in providing information and space for participation for the public, including first-time voters.

The importance of social media existence is considered to provide an alternative space that complements the traditional political participation model of voters, including first-time voters. Thus, social media does not replace what has existed so far, but only provides new offering space. Although there are some important exceptions related to the use of social media, in terms of first-time voters, social media has become an important alternative for their political participation efforts (Mhlomi and Oluyinka 2017). In this understanding, social media has become an important aspect in shaping the political preferences of first-time voters.

In this case, social media has enabled first-time voters to engage with practical political space by first obtaining a variety of information that complements the basic understanding gained from school. Thus, the development of their understanding gets reinforcement from the information they get from social media. This is also important because social media also allows them to communicate their views and their opinions in order to get a response or to examine its accuracy in the context by looking at the pros and cons of their views. Based on this, the first-time voters then have a basis for determining the information received as appropriate for the construction of their political preferences. Through this process, new voters were given new, two-way space in their efforts to develop their political attitudes.

Previously, the role of parents was the main aspect of giving color to their preferences and political attitudes, but the developments around them through cultural developments related to the presence of social media have actually provided input and influence on the construction of their attitudes. In this case, most of the informants saw that social media contributed in facilitating their efforts to sharpen their understanding of politics and share their consequences as citizens. This is partly due to the large amount of information that is developing around their environment being photographed by social media which is something that first-time voters desperately seek to confirm their basic understanding.

#### 4 Conclusion

This research shows that the formation of political preferences among first-time voters seems to have had a big influence from the massive social media presence these days. Indeed, as a first-time voter with status as a student at high school, the initial understanding of politics in terms of the rights and obligations of citizens is largely influenced by the education process and extra-curricular activities in schools. However, this seems to be only a starting point for introductions to political space. This is because the lessons received have not provided in-depth information and descriptions of political space, especially in a practical context. This makes efforts to shape their political preferences require efforts and other information.

These various conditions ultimately lead to the condition that first-time voters who access social media then discuss politics with their parents and family and try to do related things at school tend to have a better understanding than those who do not. This is because they get a more complete source of preferences regarding their socio-cultural contexts. Sources of information from social media do play an important role today, but the presence of information from parents and relevant school activities is sufficient to complement the sources of political preference.

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