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VOICES FROM THE
CLASSROOM

Vana Chiou, Lotte Geunis, Oliver Holz,
Nesrin Oruç Ertürk, Justyna Ratkowska-Pasikowska,
Fiona Shelton (Eds.)

RESEARCH AND EVIDENCE-BASED PERSPECTIVES IN EDUCATION

DIVERSE DISCOURSE,
CONNECTED CONVERSATIONS

WAXMANN

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edited by

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Nesrin Oruç Ertürk, Justyna Ratkowska-Pasikowska, &
Fiona Shelton

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Preface

In his book *Narrative Power*, Ken Plummer (2019: xiii)¹ asks us to consider how “we build sustainable stories to support the progress of our world and our humanities”. One answer to this question is that we can do this by learning from each other, from our research, our experiences and our shared humanity. This book, therefore, goes some way to answer Plummer’s question by sharing voices from different spaces and places, to create a plurality of voices to understand, solve and offer new solutions to challenges we face in education every day.

This book brings together research and evidence-based perspectives in education, sharing diverse discourses, which can lead to connected conversations to support the progress of the world, especially in relation to the different phases of education in which the different authors are working.

This is the fourth publication in the ‘Voices from the Classroom’ series, which examines a broad range of educational themes. The book comprises sixty chapters and is organised in four parts: Pre-school & Primary Education; Secondary Education; Higher Education; Gender, Diversity & Inclusion.

Whilst the discourses are diverse, what connects these conversations is the interest and curiosity in education. After all, the authors are teachers, researchers, professors, and students each with their own investment in different educational contexts and how they are experienced and can be enhanced. Their inquiry into educational challenges presents opportunities to learn from their questions and solutions, to try out new approaches and to remain open minded about the possibilities that exist in improving educational practices, policy and outcomes.

The chapter authors remind us of the complexity of education. That one size does not fit all and that solutions to challenges need to be evidence informed and carefully considered. We should also be cognisant that what works in one context, country or classroom might not work in other contexts and that we need to stay curious to find our own solutions, but with the insight of others to guide us. We can also glean ideas from different contexts, whilst the book is organised in different phases of education, the chapters are discrete, and solutions focussed. We believe there is learning that can be applied taking a cross-phase approach.

The book does not need to be read in a linear fashion, there is not one place to start and another where it finishes. Rather it is a collection of educational stories, and we advise you to start with a chapter that interests you, that is close to your own phase of education or where the subject matter intrigues or challenges your thinking.

1 Plummer, K. (2019). *Narrative Power*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

In our book the stories are values-based, social, political and educational. They highlight contemporary issues of our time and are grounded in research and evidence-based practice. We hope you find it accessible and interesting and, returning to the beginning of this preface, that it goes some way to answer Plummer's question (Plummer, 2019) on how we can build sustainable stories to support the progress of our world and our humanities.

Vana Chiou (Greece), Lotte Geunis (Belgium), Oliver Holz (Belgium), Nesrin Oruç Ertürk (Turkey), Justyna Ratkowska-Pasikowska (Poland) & Fiona Shelton (United Kingdom)

Perception of Beginner Voters in Indonesia in the Context of Political Education

Abstract

Indonesia is a democratic country with a geographical background of more than seventeen thousand islands. This geographical condition makes the state's reach to each region highly diverse. Elections in Indonesia are held every five years. Therefore, an elected president must be able to fulfill and lead all the needs of the unitary state, spanning from Sabang to Merauke.

The number of beginning voters in 2024 amounted to 48,800,161 people, or 22 % of the total votes in the election. When combined with the number of votes from the millennial generation, this margin is equivalent to 55 % of the total votes. This figure is very significant in determining the direction of the election results.

This research uses a qualitative approach to understand the perceptions of beginning voters in the 2024 Indonesian Presidential Election. Data was collected through interviews with participants, such as teenagers aged 17–19 who have the right to vote in the election.

Based on the interviews, beginning voters feel the election is a new experience. Participants highlight the technical aspects that occur and feel that the election process is biased. In introducing the presidential and vice presidential candidates, beginning voters gather information from various sources, such as multiple media, including discussions with family and friends. Subsequently, the participants make their decisions by voting. The results of the election evoke multiple responses. Some beginning voters support the election results, but some feel that the election was unfair. However, they hope government institutions will maintain a neutral position in their duties.

Keywords: *perception, Indonesian presidential election, beginning voters*

Introduction

Indonesia is the world's largest archipelagic state. Located in South East Asia, Indonesia covers an area of 1.905 km². According to the 2022 census by the Indonesian Central Statistics Agency, Indonesia's population is around 275.5 million, making it the fourth most populated country behind the United States (Badan Pusat Statistik Indonesia, 2022). Indonesia is also one of the world's most diverse countries, consisting of many ethnicities, races, and religions with their cultural values. This unique blend of cultures spread among individual islands that make up the state of Indonesia. However, this national identity comes with some challenges.

Indonesia’s diverse demographics and expansive geography, comprising thousands of islands separated by sea, presents a significant logistical challenge for the distribution of goods and information and mobilization. In the context of political education, Indonesia struggles with the equal distribution of information and access to it.

Hosting a once-in-five-year presidential election in Indonesia is challenging due to the diverse demographics and extensive geographical landscape. With many young voters, there is potential for significant political impact. It is crucial to empower these young voters with political knowledge and awareness so they can make informed choices, according to the 2022 national census. Based on data from the General Election Commission (2023), around 70,2 % of Indonesia’s population is of productive age. Twenty-seven percent of them are of Generation Z, and 22,85 %, or 48 million of Generation Z, are between the ages of 17 and 19 and eligible to vote.

Figure 1 presents a bar chart showing the distribution of registered voters by generation in the 2024 national election. Generation Y has the largest share, at 33.6 %, followed by Generation X, with 28.07 %, and Generation Z, with 22.85 %. Baby Boomers represent 13.73 %, and pre-boomers have the smallest share, at 1.74 %. The bar chart depicts the demographic distribution of registered voters for Indonesia’s 2024 national election, stratified by generational cohorts. The chart is segmented into four

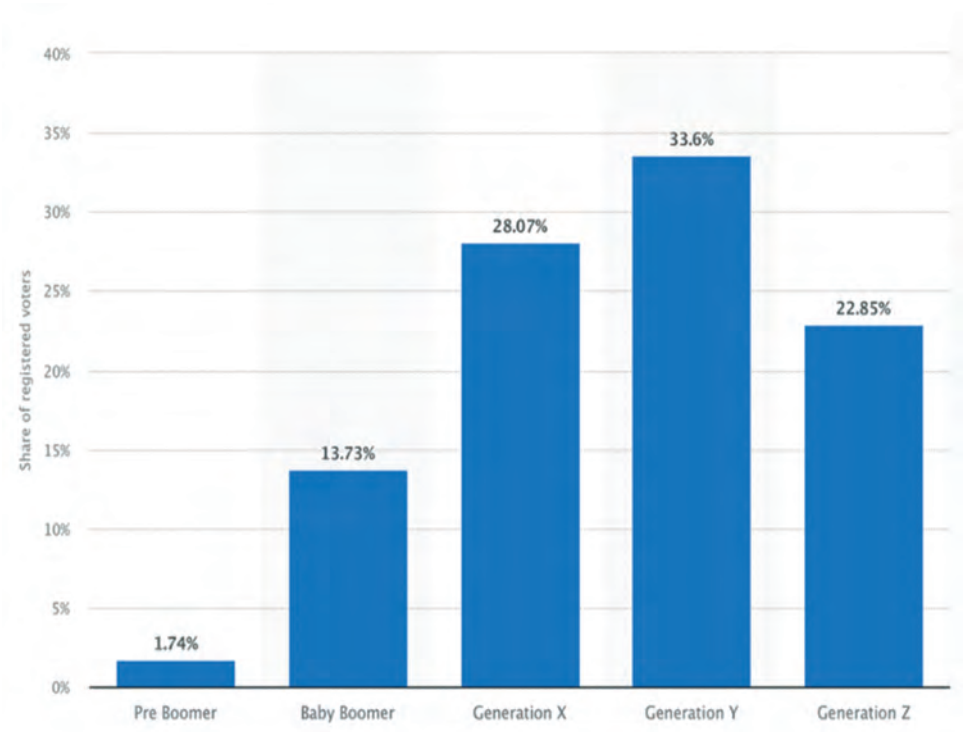


Figure 1. Registered voters from the 2024 national election
(Source: Central Statistics Agency of Indonesia, 2022)

distinct categories, each representing a specific age group of the electorate. The Millennial generation, encompassing individuals aged 28–43, constitutes the predominant segment, accounting for 43.03 % of registered voters. This is followed by Generation Z (aged 17–27), which comprises 27.22 % of the electorate. Generation X (aged 44–59) represents 21.78 % of voters, while the Baby Boomer and Silent generations (aged 60 and above) collectively account for 7.97 % of registered voters.

This visual representation effectively illustrates the substantial proportion of younger voters in the election. The combined percentage of Millennial and Generation Z voters, totalling 70.25 % of the electorate, underscores the potential influence of younger demographics on the electoral outcome. This demographic composition aligns with broader trends in emerging democracies, where younger generations often constitute a significant portion of the voting population (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005).

The bar chart's demographic breakdown provides valuable insights into the age structure of Indonesia's electorate, which can have significant implications for political engagement, policy preferences, and electoral strategies (Dalton, 2016). Furthermore, this generational distribution may influence the political discourse and priorities in the upcoming election, potentially shaping the focus of campaign strategies and policy proposals to address the concerns and aspirations of these dominant voter cohorts (Norris & Inglehart, 2019).

Given the significant number of young voters in Indonesia, many of whom are still in high school or university, the importance of implementing political education in schools cannot be overstated. This education is about providing information and equipping students with the skills necessary to dissect political information objectively. By doing so, we can ensure that the future of Indonesia's political landscape is in the hands of informed and responsible citizens.

The research aims to explore and analyze beginning voters' perceptions regarding the presidential election in Indonesia, specifically within their political education experiences. Political education in this research aims to shape individuals into responsible political participants (Sa'adawisna & Putra, 2023). Therefore, voter education must strive to educate people effectively, ensuring they are literate in political matters. This means every individual is expected to remain politically aware, as they represent the next generation of hope for the nation.

Kantaprawira (2006) emphasized the transformative power of political education. It is about increasing public political knowledge and enabling active and optimal participation in the political system. This aligns with the principles of popular sovereignty or people's democracy, empowering individuals to fulfil their duties and functions as active participants.

Political education

Political education aims to help people understand the principles of democracy, such as freedom, equality, and the rule of law (Galston, 2001). It also helps develop critical thinking skills to evaluate politicians' ideas and policies and make informed voting decisions. Political education aims to help individuals understand current events and

how political decisions affect their lives, encouraging active involvement in improving society (He et al., 2021).

According to Denver and Hands (1990), a formal political educational program helps develop political knowledge, political perception, political openness, opinion openness, judging skills, and arguing skills. As a whole, political education aims to teach about the political system and values of what ideologies or who's leader can offer. However, political education also increases the chances that an individual will participate in political discretion and career.

He, Dong, Liu, and Zou (2021) said that political education is more than just learning about politics and values. It is a journey of personal growth that contributes to a deeper understanding of life, society, and their studies. The right attitudes and values pave the way for societal progress and personal development. In the era of information overload, political education is a vital tool that helps students navigate the digital landscape. It teaches them to discern fact from fiction, enabling them to form well-rounded opinions and engage in meaningful political discussions. This, in turn, ensures balanced and informed decision-making, a crucial skill in the digital age. In political education, the student can address psychological challenges by providing support to cope with the mental impact of the information age, such as stress and misinformation, improve emotional well-being, frustration tolerance, adaptability, and communication skills. Furthermore, students will have a holistic development through political education that combines knowledge, values, and critical thinking skills, preparing students to take an active and responsible role in society and politics.

According to Affandi (2019), political education develops critical thinking, rational decision-making, and creative problem-solving skills in citizenship issues. It encourages looking at issues from different angles, making intelligent choices, thinking outside the box, and empowering active participation in democracy and public discussions to shape the future of communities and countries.

The study of beginning voters' perceptions in Indonesia intersects with several key areas of political science and education research, including political socialization, civic education, and youth political engagement. This research builds upon and extends existing literature in these fields, particularly in the context of a diverse, archipelagic democracy like Indonesia.

Political socialization, as defined by Hyman (1959), is the process by which individuals acquire political attitudes and behaviors. In the context of beginning voters, this process is particularly crucial. Niemi and Hepburn (1995) argued that late adolescence and early adulthood are critical periods for political learning as individuals develop a more sophisticated understanding of political concepts and form lasting political orientations. Our study of 17-19-year-old voters in Indonesia aligns with this theoretical framework, examining how these young citizens navigate their first electoral experience.

However, while Niemi and Hepburn's work focused primarily on Western democracies, our research extends this inquiry into the unique context of Indonesia. As Aspinall and Mietzner (2019) note, Indonesia's democratic transition and consolidation present distinct challenges for political socialization, including regional disparities, ethnic diversity, and the legacy of authoritarian rule. Our study contributes to this

literature by examining how these factors influence the political perceptions of beginning voters.

The role of civic education in shaping political engagement has been extensively studied. Galston's (2001) seminal work emphasized the importance of political knowledge in fostering democratic participation. However, critiques such as those by Westheimer and Kahne (2004) argue that civic education often focuses too narrowly on knowledge transmission at the expense of developing critical thinking and active citizenship skills. Our research builds on these debates by examining how beginning voters in Indonesia engage with political information and form their electoral decisions.

In the Indonesian context, Nurwardani et al. (2016) have highlighted the challenges of implementing effective civic education in a diverse, decentralized system. Their work points to the need for culturally responsive approaches to political education. Our study extends this line of inquiry by examining how beginning voters navigate these educational challenges and seek out political information.

The digital dimension of political engagement among youth has gained increasing attention in recent years. Loader et al. (2014) argue that social media and digital platforms are reshaping youth political participation, creating new forms of engagement that challenge traditional political structures. However, as Boulianne (2015) notes in her meta-analysis, the impact of social media on political engagement is complex and context-dependent. Our study contributes to this debate by examining how Indonesian beginning voters use various information sources, including social media, to form their political perceptions. While these studies provide valuable insights, they also have limitations. Much existing research on youth political engagement focuses on Western democracies, potentially limiting its applicability to the Indonesian context. Additionally, studies like those by Nurwardani et al. (2016) often focus on formal civic education programs, potentially overlooking the informal ways young people engage with politics. Our research aims to address these gaps by providing a nuanced, context-specific examination of beginning voters' perceptions in Indonesia.

Literacy rates and political education

The research found that literacy rates significantly influence political education. UNESCO noted that Indonesia's reading interest index is only 0.001, meaning only one in 1,000 people is interested in reading. Indonesians read an average of zero to one book per year, lower than the two to three books read annually by residents of other ASEAN countries (Daud, 2023). The low Literacy rate in Indonesia affects people's ability to understand and filter the right information (Permatasari, 2015).

The survey results reveal a concerning trend among college students in Indonesia, who place a high level of trust in the Internet. Approximately 20 % of these students believe all network information, with an additional 56 % trusting most of it. Only 17 % occasionally trust it, and less than 1 % never believe it (Nudiati & Sudiapermana, 2020). This blind trust in online information can lead to potential harm, as the Internet, while convenient, also presents retrieval challenges, often requiring more time

to search for and obtain necessary information (He et al., 2021). According to Cassel and Lo (1997), political literacy determines one's knowledge and understanding of the basic function of political processes and issues. This enables people to function as citizens who participate in providing political awareness.

Research method

This research employed a qualitative method, gathering data through semi-structured interviews. The subjects are five adolescents aged 17–19 who have had their first voting experience. The respondents are from three major cities in Indonesia: Yogyakarta, Jakarta, and Bandung.

The data analysis was conducted using the thematic analysis method conducted by Braun and Clarke (2006). The approach includes six steps, namely 1) familiarizing yourself with your data, 2) generating initial codes, 3) searching for themes, 4) reviewing themes, 5) defining and naming themes, and 6) producing the report. The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews based on predetermined interview guidelines and flexibly adapted to individual conversations by asking follow-up questions when necessary.

Results

The researcher is thoroughly acquainted with the data to begin the thematic analysis. This initial step requires preparing the materials and reviewing relevant literature to understand the context and terminology used by both the researcher and participants. Next, the researcher conducts a preliminary analysis to identify potential themes emerging from the interview data. Following the initial review, the researcher performs a more comprehensive data analysis. This phase highlights and emphasizes specific quotes or sentences that help shape and support the developing themes. For a visual depiction of the interview data analysis process, please refer to the accompanying figure below the original text.

The second major step involves creating thematic codes that can be applied to the textual data. The codes developed are thematic, aiming to capture the rich, nuanced qualities of the studied phenomena (Boyatzis, 1998). These codes are designed to effectively explain and account for most of the data (Joffe, 2012). Their purpose is to encapsulate and represent the perspectives expressed by the study participants. In this study, the researcher began by transcribing relevant statements from the interview transcripts. These excerpts were then translated into a chart format to facilitate coding. The researcher could then systematically apply the developed thematic codes to the charted data, allowing for a structured analysis of the participants' viewpoints and experiences. In statements 29–33, *I only heard a little from family, friends, and my social media reach without researching sites and various sources. As time passed, especially during the campaign period, I decided to do more in-depth research and position myself as neutrally as possible. The aim is, of course, so that I can take sides*

25 Interviewer: In the 2024 elections that have been held, do you know the presidential and vice
 26 presidential candidate pairs that you have chosen in their entirety?
 27 How did you get to know him, and what made you feel that this candidate pair was the right choice?
 28 Explain your opinion.
 29 Respondent: It needs to be emphasized that the 2024 election is my first election experience, where
 30 I have just entered the world of politics intensively and thoroughly. Previously, I only heard much
 31 from family, friends, and my social media reach without researching sites and various sources. As
 32 time passed, especially during the campaign period, I decided to do more in-depth research and
 33 position myself as neutrally as possible. The aim is, of course, so that I can take sides and choose
 34 the best presidential and vice presidential candidates based on facts and strong reasons. The 2024
 35 election is indeed hot and full of thorns throughout the political journey. However, from all the
 36 debates I watched and all the news/articles I read, my desire to make the best possible choice came
 37 true. I am not an expert on politics, but I understand the correct ethics and legal basis in Indonesia
 38 from PKN lessons from elementary school until graduating from high school. Any candidate
 39 (presidential and vice-presidential candidate) certainly has advantages and disadvantages, but
 40 those who violate the law will be removed from my choice. After that, I can determine my final
 41 choice by monitoring the candidates' debates and seeing how confident and realistic the vision and
 42 mission they describe are. Apart from that, I also pay attention in terms of character and ability
 43 because being a state leader means managing domestic affairs and diplomacy abroad. This means
 44 that, as president, whoever is elected, I hope to maintain Indonesia's strength and sovereignty in
 45 the realm of diplomacy, economics, and other domestic affairs, especially regarding education.

Figure 2. Step 1. Familiarizing with the data

and choose the best presidential and vice presidential candidates based on facts and strong reasons. The researcher gave the code “source used” because the statements were respondents’ expressions of their efforts.

The third step involves identifying overarching themes by examining how the individual codes can be logically sequenced, structured, and combined (Nowell et al., 2017). The researcher collects all the codes applied to each participant’s data and looks for connections to merge them into broader themes. In the initial responses, themes such as sourcing information, in-depth research, and taking action began to emerge. These thematic threads persisted across all participants’ responses to the final respondent.

The fourth step is reviewing and refining the tentative themes identified. The researcher carefully re-examines the data to ensure the themes are coherent and capture the full depth And meaning of the dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The thematic map’s accuracy in representing the data’s essence is thoroughly assessed.

In the fifth step, the researcher clearly defines the essence of each theme and gives it a concise, meaningful name (Braun & Clarke, 2006). At this stage, the researcher synthesized all the participant themes into broader, oversignificant secondes. Based on the analysis, the key themes reflecting the perception of beginner voters in Indonesia in the context of political elections were identified as new experience, in-depth investigation, a feeling of fairness, and hopefulness.

The sixth step is to make a report. Data analysis materializes in written form and is organized into a compilation of themes unearthed from the collected data. Based on the data analysis, the research concludes that the perceptions of beginning voters regarding the presidential election in Indonesia encompass several aspects: 1) New Experience. Beginning voters feel the election is a new experience, 2) In-depth Investigation. Beginning voters gather information about presidential candidates from

various sources, including discussions with family and friends; 3) Feelings of Injustice. The election results evoke various responses. Participants highlighted technical aspects of the process and felt that the election was biased. Some beginning voters support the results, while others feel the election was unfair, 4) Hope. Despite varied reactions to the election results, participants emphasize the importance of impartiality in government institutions.

The research findings reveal four key themes in the perceptions of beginning voters in Indonesia: new experience, in-depth investigation, feelings of injustice, and hopefulness. These themes can be understood within the broader theoretical frameworks of political socialisation and civic engagement.

The theme of “new experience” aligns with Niemi and Hepburn’s (1995) emphasis on late adolescence as a critical period for political learning. Our participants’ descriptions of the election as a novel experience suggest that this first encounter with formal democratic processes is indeed a significant moment in their political socialization. However, unlike in more established democracies, Indonesian beginning voters face the additional challenge of navigating a relatively young democratic system. As Aspinall and Mietzner (2019) note, Indonesia’s democratic institutions are still evolving, which may contribute to our participants’ sense of novelty and uncertainty.

The “in-depth investigation” theme reflects the active information-seeking behavior of beginning voters. This finding challenges simplistic notions of youth political apathy and aligns more closely with the concept of “engaged citizenship” proposed by Dalton (2008). Our participants’ use of multiple information sources, including family discussions and social media, demonstrates a sophisticated approach to political learning beyond formal civic education. This aligns with Loader et al.’s (2014) observations about the changing nature of youth political engagement in the digital age.

However, the “feelings of injustice” theme suggests that increased political knowledge and engagement do not necessarily lead to increased trust in political institutions. This finding resonates with Westheimer and Kahne’s (2004) critique of civic education, which focuses solely on knowledge transmission without developing critical thinking skills. The perception of bias in the electoral system among our participants indicates a need for civic education that not only informs about democratic processes but also equips young citizens to critically evaluate these processes.

Despite concerns about fairness, the theme of “hopefulness” presents an interesting paradox. This complex relationship between scepticism and optimism among young voters echoes findings by Cammaerts et al. (2014) on European youth political participation. They found that young people often combine criticism of current political systems with a desire for change and improvement. In the Indonesian context, this hopefulness may reflect the country’s relatively recent transition to democracy and the ongoing process of democratic consolidation.

These findings have significant implications for political education in Indonesia. The active information-seeking behavior of beginning voters suggests a need for educational approaches beyond traditional classroom-based civic education. As Nurwardani et al. (2016) argue, there is a need for culturally responsive civic education in Indonesia. Our findings suggest that this should include developing skills for critically evaluating diverse information sources, including social media.

The perception of bias in the electoral system among our participants highlights the importance of transparency in democratic processes. This aligns with Norris's (2014) work on electoral integrity, which emphasizes the role of public confidence in the legitimacy of democratic institutions. For Indonesia, this suggests improved electoral processes and better communication about these processes to young voters.

Finally, the combination of scepticism and hopefulness among our participants points to the potential for engaged, critical citizenship among Indonesia's youth. As Dalton (2008) argues, this critical engagement can be a positive force for democratic renewal. However, realizing this potential will require political education that not only informs young citizens about democratic processes but also empowers them to actively participate in shaping these processes.

The research also highlights unique challenges in the Indonesian educational context. The country's low literacy rates, with only one in 1,000 people showing interest in reading (Daud, 2023), present significant obstacles to political education efforts. This is further complicated by the high trust college students place in online information (Nudiati & Sudiapermana, 2020), emphasizing the need for integrated digital literacy skills in political education programs.

In conclusion, our study contributes to the literature on youth political engagement by providing a nuanced, context-specific examination of beginning voters' perceptions in Indonesia. It highlights the complex interplay between political socialization, information-seeking behavior, and perceptions of democratic processes in a diverse, evolving democracy. Future research could further explore how these perceptions translate into political behavior over time, and how they vary across Indonesia's diverse regions and social groups.

Conclusion

Based on the result, the key themes reflecting the perception of beginner voters in Indonesia in the context of political elections were identified as new experience, in-depth investigation, feeling of fairness, and hopefulness. It is essential to recognize the significant number of adolescents eligible to vote on critical national decisions, even though they may have limited literacy skills. Despite this, they are trying to seek out information and engage in independent discussions. Educational institutions should create platforms for discussing political issues that adolescents can critically evaluate. These discussions can enhance their critical and logical thinking skills.

The study on beginning voters in Indonesia provides valuable insights for developing targeted political education programs in a diverse and complex democratic setting. It underscores the importance of tailored educational approaches that address the Indonesian context's unique geographical, cultural, and informational challenges. Future research and educational initiatives should focus on bridging the urban-rural divide in political education, enhancing digital literacy skills, and developing innovative, engaging methods to prepare young citizens for active participation in Indonesia's democracy.

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