Democratic literacy: Challenges and opportunities to engage youth participatory in the age of digital media

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Abstract

This study endeavors to ascertain the challenges and opportunities in democracy literacy to foster active youth engagement in the digital media age. Through the implementation of Focus Group Discussions and participatory workshops involving a cohort of 17 participants, comprising eight student journalists and nine non-student journalists, who are poised to exercise their voting rights for the first time during the forthcoming 2024 elections, the research outcomes divulge that disparities exist in the democratic perspectives of student and non-student journalists, primarily due to their contrasting experiences. Nevertheless, both groups concur that a solid understanding of democratic principles empowers them to partake in the democratic process. In the digital media era context, four notable challenges emerge in democratic literacy: hoax oasis, politician stigmatization, idiot discussion engagement, and political apathy engagement. Conversely, two prospective avenues for bolstering democratic literacy are identified: information oasis and reigniting youth participation. These identified challenges and opportunities serve as fundamental pillars for formulating effective democratic literacy strategies in the digital era, thereby fostering increased participation of young voters in democratic practices.

Keywords: democratic literacy, digital information, youth participation, digital media, politician stigmatization

Introduction

Although democratic literacy is scant to be discussed among citizens, attempts to understand its challenges and opportunities must be explored to promote access to reliable information, foster civil discourse and compromise, and promote a more inclusive and engaged society. It can quickly catch the attention of researchers, policymakers, and politicians due to its widespread impact on political participation, particularly in the age of digital media. Democratic literacy is believed to be a more substantial factor in increasing citizens' participation in political activities (King, 2019).

Badan Pusat Statistik or Central Bureau Statistics of Indonesia (2019) reported that the participation of citizens in the election tended to decrease from 1999 to 2009, from 92.7 per cent to 70.99 per cent. In 2014, it increased to 75.11 per cent and 81.69 per cent in 2019. Although citizen participation recently increased, Economic Intelligence Unit (IEU) (2021) released the 2021 Democracy Index, ranking Indonesia as a flawed democracy. It is still far to be a full democracy. IEU awarded Indonesia a score of 6.71 on a scale of zero to 10, putting Indonesia in 52nd rank out of 167 countries. These data show that Indonesia still has a colossal homework to improve the quality of democracy through protecting civil liberties, gaining independence from judicial institutions, and aligning government policies with the will of the public (Rahayu et al., 2022).

A study by Syam et al. (2020) showed that Indonesians evaluated that the implementation of democracy is still weak. It has yet to achieve the maturity level. In addition, although Indonesian youths aged 17-40 years dominate up to 60% or around 110 million of the total voters (Nua, 2023), they feel political apathy and disappointment. Through their digital media devices, they witnessed corruption scandals of politicians openly discussed and shared on social media (Hatherell, 2018).

Young people' frustrations arising from corrupt practices (Freedman & Tiburzi, 2012) influence their perception that the voices of politicians fail to adequately represent the voices of the citizens (Roosinda & Suryandaru, 2020). These sentiments and observations contribute to a decline in the political engagement of Indonesian youth, posing a threat to democratic practices. This decline is a warning sign that the government and society have neglected to provide democratic

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literacy training to young individuals. Such activity is necessary to prevent the manipulation of voters and the reduction of political participation (Masduki & Widianingsih, 2021, p. 43).

Action to build democratic literacy has been incorporated as a critical strategy in improving the quality of democracy since it can be central to encouraging citizens' political participation. Pontes et al. (2019) stated that educating youths impacts their political engagement and participation. Given that, young Indonesians demonstrate poor or inadequate democratic literacy skills. They must know their fundamental rights and responsibilities as citizens (UNFPA, 2014). This condition can be due to a lack of education in democratic values and ongoing challenges related to access to information and civil society participation.

Having democratic literacy skills in the digital age does not mean simply the ability to identify and understand the democratic information that is massively spreading through digital media, as necessary as these basic skills are. Instead, we suggest that the ability to identify and understand to gain success in a democratic country, analyzing, synthesizing, and connecting information from different sources become more critical in improving democratic literacy skills (Morais, 2018; UNESCO, 2022). These higher-level skills are now essential to young Indonesians who wish to explore political issues that impact their community and participate in a democracy that faces complex problems.

Democratic literacy in the digital age is a prerequisite to building and maintaining a democratic nation where most people are connected through digital media (Sinpeng, 2021). Digital media has changed how political information is transmitted (Norris, 2004), where every individual can create, share, and re-share information through their social media accounts. On the other hand, digital media has also functioned as a propaganda tool to influence people (Kenterelidou, 2005).

Although democratic literacy skills have become the critical foundation for improving citizen engagement in democratic activities, research on democratic literacy in the digital era is scant. Most researchers investigate digital media literacy (Lee, 2018; Kahne & Bowyer, 2019), health literacy (Abel & McQueen, 2020; Morrison et al., 2019), financial literacy (Karakurum-Ozdemir et al., 2019; Lusardi et al., 2019), and reading literacy (Ho & Lau, 2018; Chen et al., 2022). A study on democratic literacy is needed since it can contribute to strategies to increase political participation and make people more critical of the political information they consume. Therefore, challenges and opportunities for improving democratic literacy skills should be identified before designing democracy literacy training.

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Internet and digital devices have assumed a vital role in the lives of Indonesian youths, with a notable surge in Internet usage by 19.3 per cent, averaging 11.6 hours per day (Luthfia et al., 2021). The age group of 13-18 years old exhibits the highest rate of Internet penetration among youths, followed by the age group of 19-34 years old (APJII, 2022). Their heavy internet use not only provides opportunities to expose positive content and potential risks but also provides possibilities to participate in democratic practices that were not accessible before. However, conflicts, fights, slurs, and fragmentation among politicians they see on digital media make youths apathetic to political participation (Suwana, 2018). These bad portrayals on digital media can decrease their online political participation.

As digital-savvy individuals, youths access information from social media. Through this media, they can express their political views by sharing, re-sharing, and discussing with other digital media users (Yasih & Alamsyah, 2014). Nevertheless, these activities provide opportunities for youths to expose to fake news circulating quickly on social media sites (Mason et al., 2018). Both credible and fake information spreading online influence their political choices without examining the credibility of the content (Yasih & Alamsyah, 2014).

Digital media platforms bring new challenges to democracy since it increases the volume of information youths access (Mason et al., 2018). They take information for granted without checking the validity and reliability of the content. Deep discussions and verifying the source on social media are rarely done among social media users (Yasih & Alamsyah, 2014). Therefore, the role of citizens is essential to encounter disinformation circulating in social media (Mason et al., 2018).

On the other hand, youths can use social media to criticize public policies, shame corrupt bureaucrats, highlight social problems, sign online petitions to bring about change and organize street protests. Also, social media offers equal and free participation opportunities as long as they

have internet access. They feel this platform can shape matters affecting their lives (Yasih & Alamsyah, 2014).

Democracies rely on informed citizens to function effectively (Mason et al., 2018). Educated citizens have the knowledge and skills necessary to make informed decisions, hold elected representatives accountable, and participate in democratic processes such as voting, advocacy, and community organizing. Traditional and digital news media should be free, credible, and independent in providing information since they are a pillar of functioning democracy, influencing voters to make informed decisions (Borchardt, 2019). A democratic country can develop or survive depending on the news and information citizens consume (Ashley, 2020, p.173). Hence, democratic literacy becomes the foundation of a democratic nation. To be able to vote for accountable leaders and criticize public policies, citizens must have the competence and skills to identify, understand, and interpret the information they consume to be able to analyze and link information from different sources critically. These competence and skills are essential to being active agents in democracy (Morais, 2018).

Literacy involves a continuum of learning enabling individuals to achieve their goals, develop their knowledge and potential, and participate fully in their community and broader society (UNESCO, 2022). Democratic literacy encourages citizens to realize they have equal rights to articulate their views without fear (Prah, 2007). Democratically literate citizens are better equipped to understand their rights and freedoms and advocate for policies that protect and promote these values.

Literacy, including democratic literacy, is a dynamic process involving advocates and participants (Moje et al., 2000). Advocates, such as educators, civil society organizations, and media outlets, play an essential role in promoting democratic literacy by providing education and resources to help individuals become informed and engaged citizens. Improving democratic literacy can be done with a series of lessons to develop citizens' knowledge so that they can become active agents to educate other individuals to have the ability and skills to understand the reality of democratic issues.

Through democratic literacy, youths understand democratic principles, political institutions, and the role of citizens in democratic processes. Developing digital literacy in the digital age helps youths discern between reliable and unreliable sources of information and understand how digital media can shape public opinion and influence democratic processes to encourage them to participate in democratic processes, such as voting, advocacy, and community organizing. Digital literacy includes information on registering to vote, creating opportunities for individuals to engage with elected representatives, and supporting community-led initiatives promoting democratic participation. In the context of young voters in Indonesia, Al-Hamdi & Sofyan's (2023) research results show significant changes between groups of novice voters who have not been exposed to political education programs compared to those who have not. First-time voters exposed to political education feel that they have a change in political participation, an increase in positive perceptions of political issues and a significant decrease in negative views on political issues.

Method

A case study approach was used to achieve the research objectives as it is the most appropriate method for focusing on a particular way of defining a situation. This method concentrated on one example of a more significant event (Gerring, 2004) and offered a research tool to study complex phenomena within a specific context (Baxter & Jack, 2008). This research expands the comprehensive data by employing a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and participatory workshop anchored to the focus group through creative activities generating participants to share their experiences and thoughts (Breen, 2006; Lomibao, 2021).

Participants

This study encompassed the participation of a cohort comprising 17 individuals poised to exercise their voting rights for the first time in the upcoming 2024 elections. These participants were further categorized into two groups: student journalists, consisting of eight individuals, and non-student journalists, comprising nine individuals, as shown in Table 1. Student journalists

actively engage in press activities within the academic setting, wherein they express their perspectives on various issues through mass media coverage. Their involvement is characterized by a propensity for critical analysis, the courage to engage in argumentation, an inclination for investigative pursuits, and a commitment to disseminating the outcomes of their critical thinking through news media, especially with regard to matters concerning the institutions they scrutinize (Click et al., 1997). In contrast, non-student journalists demonstrate a relatively more passive disposition towards external phenomena, including political matters.

To select suitable candidates, purposive sampling was employed to ensure that potential participants possessed sufficient knowledge and experience regarding the issues under investigation. Once potential participants had been identified based on research objectives, they were contacted via WhatsApp to inform them of the study's purpose. Subsequently, a face-to-face meeting was arranged to discuss their rights and responsibilities in participating in the study. After receiving this information and understanding their rights and responsibilities, participants were asked to provide voluntary consent by signing a consent form indicating their willingness to participate. The researchers also sought permission to use the participants' data while ensuring their identities remained confidential to respect their privacy. For participants under the age of 17, permission was sought from their parents through their signature on the consent form since they include vulnerable participants due to their age (Benzon & Blerk, 2017). Each participant was offered an incentive of Rp 100,000 (USD 6.78) in cash and a goodie bag for their participation in the study.

Procedure

On Sunday, 22 November 2022, data collection for this study was conducted through FGD and participatory workshop. FGD was chosen as the preferred data collection method because the participants in this study share similar characteristics, namely, young people comprising both journalists and non-journalist students. Before conducting the FGD, the researchers provided the moderator with a clear understanding of the study's purpose and a list of questions to be asked to the participants. The researchers also informed the participants about the research objectives. They asked for their permission to record the FGD and use the data provided while ensuring that the participants' identities remained confidential to respect their privacy.

The face-to-face FGD was guided by the moderator, who began with small talk to establish a relaxed atmosphere, followed by a discussion based on a predetermined question guide. The FGD guide focused on democracy literacy and digital news consumption for young people. It elicited narrative responses from the participants, particularly about their perspectives and experiences with democracy issues in the digital media era. The researchers monitored the FGD's progress and ensured the discussion focused on the research objectives.

During the participatory workshop, the researchers explained its purpose and how it would be conducted. Following this, they sought permission to record the workshop and use the gathered data, creating a non-formal and relaxed atmosphere to facilitate open discussion. The workshop started with a creative activity encouraging participants to narratively share their thoughts and experiences. Specifically, the participants were asked to draw their interpretation of the concept of "democracy" based on their perspectives and experiences. Subsequently, all participants were allowed to share their pictures.

The workshop continued distributing printed happy and sad emoji images to each participant. The researchers then read out 14 statements about democracy in the digital era, to which the participants responded by showing either a happy or sad emoji image, depending on their reactions to each statement. Based on the statement provided, the researchers followed up with the participants to ask about their feelings. This method aimed to generate rich qualitative data and gain insights into the participants' perspectives and experiences related to democracy in the digital era.

Data analysis

The researchers transcribed the FGD and participatory workshop recordings following the data collection phase. The transcripts were then meticulously studied while listening to the recordings to ensure the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the data. Next, the researchers coded the data relevant to the research questions, and these initial codes were subsequently grouped into two main themes—challenges and opportunities in democratic literacy.

The research findings were then presented using textual descriptions of the transcription to provide concrete examples to support the results. In addition, the research findings were analyzed inductively, allowing the researchers to identify patterns and develop new insights into the data. This rigorous analysis ensured that the research findings were robust and provided valuable insights into the participants' perspectives and experiences on democracy in the digital era.

Results and Discussion

Democratic literacy

Understanding the principles of democracy is critical in democratic literacy. Youths—student journalists and non-student journalists emphasize democracy in the government system where the power is held by citizens who elect their representatives through the general elections. In addition, they also highlight that in a democratic system, honesty, fairness, openness, and responsiveness to citizens' needs and opinions become the core characteristics of democracy. However, student journalists' perspectives on democracy emphasize the values, rules, or policies supporting the democratic system. Meanwhile, non-student journalists' perspectives tend to emphasize the procedural and participative aspects of the democratic process.

Student journalists argued that grasping the fundamental concepts of democracy is crucial for attaining democratic literacy, including an understanding of democratic values, such as freedom of speech, equality, and justice. Individuals can freely voice their opinions and share their thoughts and ideas without fear through direct face-to-face expression or digitally mediated communication. The freedom to speak up and criticize is not limited to government officials but also to policies made by politicians. In addition, all individuals are considered equal and have equal rights and opportunities under the law, such as the right to express their voices and receive support or assistance. Lastly, individuals are entitled to equal treatment under the law—their rights to fairness and protection. The law binds all citizens. No one is above the law. Legal institutions, such as the courts, the police, and other law enforcement agencies, must act impartially and without bias when enforcing the law.

> "Democracy is closely related to freedom of expression. So, if someone is dissatisfied with government policies or the implementation of these policies, the public also has the right to express their opinion." (Participant 1_participatory workshop)

> "Everyone should get the same rights. The right to express opinions, the right to receive assistance, and all must have the same rights. [...] In my opinion, the essence of democracy is a just government. So, if they talk about people getting the same rights, they really have to live up to those promises. Don't just give help when you have a camera. It really has to be done honestly and fairly." (Participant 5_participatory workshop)

> "Well, in my opinion, the legal institution is not right. In my opinion, legal institutions should be firm. I mean, if there is a corruption suspect, he could just take a bribe or something like that, right, as we all know. I once watched the program Mata Najwa, where a prison that looks like luxury is shown. There was a TV. So, in my opinion, a legal institution should be strict. That's what needs to be fixed." (Participant 6_participatory workshop).

On the other hand, non-student journalists assumed that procedural and participative aspects become critical components of the democratic process to ensure that decisions are made fairly and inclusively. Procedural aspects refer to formal procedures used to make decisions in a participatory manner. Participative elements refer to the active involvement of citizens in the democratic process, such as voting in general elections.

> "Maybe in a democracy, we can make decisions. The problem is that the democratic system is based on the aspirations of each individual. So, with democracy, we can create and make decisions." (Participant 9_FGD)

"Yes, we talked about voting earlier, so one example is elections." (Participant 12_FGD)

In addition, democratic literacy includes the ability to evaluate information critically. Youths must be able to critically evaluate the information they receive from multiple sources and platforms. Critical evaluation of information involves assessing the credibility of information sources. Fact-checking the information by seeking additional sources effectively corroborates or contradicts their encounters. Youths should be cautious of information that seems too good to be true or plays on emotions, as these may be signs of a hoax.

"So, hoax news often appears on my Twitter account, to be precise, on my timeline, that's how it is. One or two accounts like to spread hoax news that is not necessarily true. Usually, on these accounts, there are also replies or responses from netizens. Well, there are netizens who believe in that account and those who don't believe it. So, like it or not, I have to check again whether the information is true or not." (Participant 2_participatory workshop)

"[…] I read the comments making me confused. Is this true information or not? So, I have to check again, make sure whether the information I got is correct or not." (Participant 6_participatory workshop)

Conversely, different findings emerged from the non-student press, who actually did not care about the political dynamics that emerged through their social media homepages. They tend to be apathetic and ignore the information that arises because they think it is not directly related to their current life. These non-student press participants also indirectly did not realize that their role was crucial in general elections that required their vote participation as young voters. More explicitly talking about the need for information verification to seek the truth of news information, the group of young non-student press voters chose to ignore and not care. The reason is not interesting or directly related to their lives.

"Regarding the importance of checking political information on social media, I am not doing it because I am not interested and not too deep in it." (Participant 17_participatory workshop)

"Maybe I don't care, more precisely not yet because now I'm already lazy too. For nowadays, I think it's more about school and playing. At least when I get older, I will think about it." (Participant 16_participatory workshop)

Furthermore, democratic literacy includes engaging in civil discourse in respectful and constructive communication with others, even when there are differences of opinion or disagreements. In addition, civil discourse allows youths to express their thoughts through social media platforms and learn from other social media users by discussing specific interesting and updated issues, such as gaining other social media users' perspectives by having discussions on Instagram stories and WhatsApp groups, even organizing a discussion on zoom meeting by inviting credible speakers to find new perspectives in understanding specific issues.

"If there are friends who are exciting to discuss, I usually PC (personal chat) to them one by one. So, after that, we discussed it, even though some agreed or disagreed with that opinion. It actually adds to knowledge and is really fun to talk about." (Participant 1_participatory workshop)

"For example, if I have some interesting issues, I make them on the Instagram story; then, I make a question column. It is just lovely to read friends' opinions, because if we think we need other people's points of view. Then sometimes, in the WA (WhatsApp) group with friends, what it likes to throw if there is an issue. Then if my fellow organization friends like to raise hot issues so that there is a Zoom meeting, we continue to present the speakers. It can be from the DPRD (Regional House of Representatives) to give a new view." (Participant 5_participatory workshop).

Challenges and opportunities of democratic literacy
Challenges

The pursuit of building democratic literacy necessitates an in-depth examination of several critical challenges, as highlighted in the findings of this present study. These challenges encompass the existence of hoax oases, politician stigmatization, idiot discussion engagement, and political apathy engagement.

Hoax oases

When the participants were asked about the circulation of information on social media, all participants commented that a lot of hoax information is circulated on social media because of the ease of creating and sharing information. Therefore, youths must fact-check it using reliable sources such as established news outlets or verified accounts. By doing this, youths understand specific issues and have standpoints on them. Also, by fact-checking the information, they can ensure that the information they share is accurate.

"Yes, because there were many hoaxes on social media. You do this by digging for more information, whether the news is a hoax or not." (Participant 9_FGD)

"When I got the news from IG, I immediately checked it; when I was hesitant about it, I checked it in Mafindo (platform to check hoax). So, whether the news is disinformation or misinformation, I check it there so that later when I share it is not confused and become familiar with the news or issue, so that I can take a stand on the incident." (Participant 1_participatory workshop)

Even though most young individuals fact-check the information they receive, some do not care about the credibility of the information they consume. They are not willing to cross-check to ensure the information is accurate. This phenomenon becomes an alarm that some youths lack awareness about the potential harm that false information can cause or do not understand the importance of critical thinking and fact-checking.

"Whether it is a hoax or not, it is back to yourself; find out more. If I do not want to check the news, it is a lie or not." (Participant 14_FGD)

Politician stigmatization

Participants opine that developing democratic literacy among young people can be a formidable undertaking due to the pervasive perception among most youths that politicians frequently engage in corrupt practices. The prevalent evaluation is that politicians need more inclination to promote the prosperity of citizens instead of prioritizing personal enrichment. Additionally, politicians leverage their power and influence to benefit their political parties, allies, and supporters, as political dowry is often prohibitively expensive. These unethical practices can significantly tarnish the reputation of politicians and undermine the public's trust in the political system.

"Politicians must think about the interests of the people. It should be. Only in reality not, because, hmm, like corruption. Corruption takes from people's money, right? Well, do politicians think about that is not it? They think it is corruption, just corruption. They do not think about the people at all. How can the little people live? They do not think about it. The people indeed elect them; they should be there for the people. Only they do not prioritize the interests of the people at all." (Participant 3_participatory workshop)

"However, if we look, many politicians think about the interests of the party and themselves. The term is like this, and they certainly have a background of why they are corrupt, and one of them is the expensive party dowry." (Participant 1_particitory workshop)

"In fact, many politicians "eat people's money". Not for the people, but for their interest." (Participant 9_participatory workshop)

It is noteworthy that young individuals have asserted that the affluent and influential wield more sway over the democratic process than average citizens due to their ability to utilize their financial resources and connections to lobby elected officials, granting them greater access to policymaking circles. As a result, the perspectives of the wealthy and powerful carry more weight in the corridors of power compared to those of ordinary citizens.

"Okay, if you learn from Indonesian democracy precisely and in general, the power of those who have capital and influence has a more critical role than the voices given by the people, so that democracy, in the end, practically turns into rule by money, not rule by people." (Participant 4_participatory workshop)

"The House of Representatives does not represent our voice. If the voices represented are voices for certain interests, only some of the voices of the people are heard. So, some can indeed be profitable. That's all that is listened to." (Participant 7_participatory workshop)

"If Indonesian politicians think about the people, there can't be demonstrations, there is no corruption". (Participant 12_participatory workshop)

Some youths commented that political candidates are not credible. However, political parties choose those candidates to compete in the political elections. To address concerns about the credibility of politicians, young people need to engage in the political process and hold their elected officials accountable for their actions. This can be done by staying informed about the issues, participating in elections, and contacting elected officials to voice their opinions and concerns.

"Even from that, we can see that these political candidates are not credible but can indeed be advanced by certain parties to be nominated." (Participant 8_participatory workshop)

Idiot discussion engagement

In today's digital age, social media platforms have become a significant source of information and communication for people worldwide. However, student journalists opine that not all social media users are literate or have the necessary skills to critically evaluate the information they encounter on these platforms. When they engage in specific issues discussed on social media, they only use their assumption and do not use data to support their arguments. This discussion was inconducive and stimulated conflicts among users.

"Most idiots are like that. They are idiots, so they do not have complete literacy on an issue. What they throw into the discussion room is only personal assumptions." (Participant 4_participatory workshop)

Furthermore, student journalists also commented that social media presents a range of risks and challenges associated with online discourse, including the potential exposure to hateful content. In light of this, a young user recently expressed apprehension about engaging in specific discussions on social media platforms, citing concerns about potential verbal attacks from other users. Such attacks can harm one's mental health and erode confidence.

"Social media is like a jungle with many risks. Therefore, I prefer not to discuss in open spaces because I am afraid or more likely to be lazy when exposed to verbal abuse that does not agree with me. Therefore, in addition to the influence on the mind, it also builds our confidence." (Participant 4_participatory workshop)

In contrast, while non-student journalists acknowledge the significance of social media as a vital information resource, they often refrain from actively engaging in discussions, especially pertaining to government and political matters. Their participation primarily revolves around issues that directly negatively affect their lives. Furthermore, when confronted with perspectives that

diverge from their own, they are inclined to express discontent rather than constructively contribute to the discourse.

> "Actually, I rarely comment on social media. I think many young people rarely comment actively. But yes, if someone is clearly harming me, I definitely won't stay silent. I'll be sure to comment". (Participant 14_participatory workshop)

> "Well, usually I like to grumble to myself. If a controversial issue gets to my situation, I won't comment. Maybe it's only when I really feel disadvantaged. If not, I'll just let it go first, and maybe tomorrow I'll just feel like a loss" (Participant 17_participatory workshop)

Political apathy engagement

It is not uncommon for a significant portion of young people, particularly non-student journalists, to exhibit a lack of interest in actively participating in political discourse, either in digital or physical spaces. This cohort may prefer to remain within their comfort zones, dedicating their attention to scholastic pursuits and social activities amongst their peers. This tendency may also stem from the overwhelming and convoluted nature of the contemporary political landscape, which can pose a significant obstacle for those with limited experience and understanding of the nuances involved. For some, it is a matter of time and life experience before they feel more inclined to explore political issues and engage in meaningful discussions.

> "Yes, because I never follow political issues, I do not pass by FYP (For Your Page), I do not read it, so I would not say I like to discuss politics." (Participant 12_participatory workshop)
> At our age, the game is still within the scope of our comfort zone. (Participant 17_participatory workshop)

> "Yes, if you are male now, you think like a play school; at least if you have increased your age, you will think." (Participant 16_participatiry workshop)

> "If I want to be close to this close, it is not enough because I do not want to add just thoughts according to the needs of just age; I do not want to think too far." (Participant 15_participatory workshop)

> "It is impossible to read about politics." (Participant 11_participatory workshop)

In contrast to their peers, who may exhibit little interest in political discussion, young people pursuing educational paths in politics often strongly desire to engage in discourse centred around political issues. These individuals are likely to possess a keen sense of curiosity and passion for exploring the complexities of the political realm, driven by a desire to gain a deeper understanding of the various factors that shape the world.

> "If I talk about politics, I like it because my world is about politics, and my major in IR is about politics." (Participant 9_participatory workshop)

Opportunities

In the contemporary digital era, promising avenues exist to foster democratic literacy and rekindle the active involvement of young individuals. Two noteworthy opportunities in this regard are the creation of information oases and the reignite young people participation. Information oases refer to curated online platforms or spaces providing reliable, accurate, and diverse information on democratic processes, civic engagement, and political issues. Meanwhile, reigniting young people participations refer to inclusive spaces encouraging meaningful engagement and dialogue that can inspire young individuals to actively participate in political processes and public discourse.

Information oases

The acquisition of democracy literacy represents a critical means by which young people can deepen their knowledge and understanding of the democratic process. The consumption of governmental and political information provides them with critical insights into the workings of government and citizens' attendant rights and responsibilities. Armed with this knowledge, they are better equipped to engage with and scrutinize the policies put forth by their elected representatives, thereby enhancing their capacity to participate in the democratic process as active and informed citizens. Moreover, the consumption of political content can have a self-reinforcing effect, with social media algorithms directing young people towards information and perspectives that align with their existing preferences, creating a virtuous cycle of engagement and information consumption. By leveraging the power of democracy literacy in this way, young people can become more actively engaged in shaping the future of their communities and the broader society.

"Political content is now in great demand. The algorithm encourages us to look at it, and especially when we click frequently, it comes up frequently. Therefore, I must have read political intake or information." (Participant 4_participatory workshop)

In the modern era, adolescents frequently access governmental and political information through the lens of their social media accounts. These online platforms have become ubiquitous means that individuals consume information and engage with the broader world around them. Adolescents often encounter political content serendipitously as they browse their feeds and discover new and engaging perspectives on the issues that matter most to them. By leveraging these platforms to gain access to vital governmental and political information, adolescents can develop a deeper understanding of the democratic process and become more actively engaged in the political sphere.

"If I open it more often on social media, it will automatically read more often on social media than others." (Participant 16_participatory workshop)

"If I follow some information accounts, for example, if from my area there is Punapi Bali, there is Info Bandung, it is like there are media to disseminate information in the region, but it also disseminates information about government about policies. So, if I do, read it from there. It is." (Participant 7_participatory workshop)

Reignite young people participation

The growing popularity of politicians using humour and building engagement in communicating with their audiences becomes youth attention and interest in politics. These politicians use humour to break down boundaries and make politics more approachable, relatable, and enjoyable for young people, particularly those who find politics dry or inaccessible.

The study results demonstrate that politicians who can engage with their constituents on social media are held in high regard by young people. By utilizing social media to disseminate their political messages and engaging with audiences through humorous responses to their comments, politicians can cultivate a sense of personal connection and relatability with young voters particularly inclined towards the political discourse on social media. This strategy can effectively help politicians to present a more humanized image and to better connect with younger audiences.

"Yes, because it makes you interested, for example, Ridwan Kamil, yes, because if you make people funny, you will be interested." (Participant 10_participatory workshop)

"Because he can bind young people to social media, it becomes more modern. So, the words are like, if earlier, it becomes easier to accept with a little joke added like that." (Participant 12_participatory workshop)

It can be said that young people hold a positive disposition towards politicians who demonstrate a high level of interactivity and responsiveness with their audiences on social media platforms while

staying current with current trends garnering attention from young people. Politicians can establish a strong connection with younger generations, who are highly active on social media platforms, by actively engaging with their followers and keeping abreast of the latest trends and developments. Through such interactions, politicians can create a sense of relatability and credibility with their audiences, enhancing their visibility and appeal among young people.

"Suppose Mr. Ganjar is very interactive, yes, from the caption of his comment. Then from his presentation, Mr. Ganjar said that the video can be edited and that there is text that can make it enjoyable. Another viral example on Mr. Jokowi's Instagram was an interesting character. There are cats; there are Dilan Cepmek. That is what it is like; update like that with content development now. That is what I find alluring." (Participant 5_participatory workshop)

Young people are attracted to politicians who exhibit a humorous side and incorporate jokes into their social media content. By infusing their posts with witty remarks and comedic elements, politicians can capture the attention of younger generations with a penchant for lighthearted and entertaining content on social media. It highlights that humour can potentially enhance politicians' appeal and engagement with young people on social media platforms. In addition, young people tend to respond positively to humorous social media posts by politicians, often by indicating their approval through "like" or "love" reactions.

"If I was on TikTok earlier, that was Mr. Ganjar. I do not follow, but I often pass by. The content is what can make it alluring. Mr. Ganjar is a fun person, and it's like it is hilarious with the community; you can joke around like this. So, lure him away from his content if me. If this is funny, I like it. I have no interest in how." (Participant 7_participatory workshop)

On the other hand, despite young people's preference for humorous social media posts made by politicians, it should be noted that not all young people react to these posts by giving "like" or "love" reactions.

"It is the same if you like it; you already like it but never like it." (Participant9_participatory workshop)

The cultivation of engagement between politicians and young individuals can be fostered through "like" or "love" reactions. Specifically, when young people appraise politicians as effectively executing their duties with transparency and clear communication through social media posts, such actions which endeavor to enhance the lives of citizens, they are more inclined to offer their support through the expression of "like" or "love" reactions.

"I sometimes like or love it when Mrs. Sri Mulyani and Mrs. Retno Marsudi upload their activities. I think it is transparency or publicizing that they work." (Participant 4_participatory workshop)

In addition, young people are more likely to endorse politicians who champion the opinions and concerns of citizens. By demonstrating a genuine commitment to defending the populace's interests, politicians can effectively garner support from the younger demographic, who may express their approval by utilizing the "like" or "love" reaction feature on social media posts. Such actions can catalyze greater engagement, prompting young people to seek additional information about these politicians and their policy stances.

"Now some politicians side with the people, I like. For example, when yesterday, politicians opposed rising fuel, now that is what I like. It was me stalking him personally until I liked his statement that he disagreed with the fuel rising." (Participant 5_participatory workshop)

The current study found that democratic literacy is crucial for the effective functioning of a democratic society. It is built by enhancing citizens' knowledge and skills to participate in a democratic society effectively. In developing their democratic knowledge and skills, traditional and

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digital media can be sources of information. However, the findings highlight that youths tend to access information through digital media since digital devices are in their hands. In addition, having good democratic literacy enables youths to participate in the democratic process effectively, make informed decisions—voting, uphold democratic values and principles, and supervise and criticize democratic practices.

The findings suggest that both student and non-student journalists recognize the importance of democracy in ensuring citizens' rights and fair governance. However, they seem to have different perspectives on the core components of democracy. Student journalists' focus on democratic values highlights the significance of fundamental principles that underlie democratic systems. These principles form the foundation of democratic societies and provide a framework for protecting citizens' rights and freedoms. By emphasizing the values of democracy, student journalists recognize that democratic literacy is not just about understanding the mechanics of government but also about understanding the moral and ethical underpinnings of democratic systems.

On the other hand, non-student journalists' focus on procedural and participative aspects underscores the importance of democratic practices and processes in ensuring fair and inclusive decision-making. By emphasizing the participative aspects of democracy, non-student journalists recognize that democracy is about electing representatives and actively engaging citizens in the democratic process. Moreover, by highlighting the procedural aspects of democracy, non-student journalists recognize that democratic decision-making must be transparent and consistent to ensure fairness and inclusivity.

The differences in perspectives between student and non-student journalists can be related to their different levels of professional experience. Student journalists are more focused on understanding the foundational principles of democracy, while non-student journalists witness the practical aspects of democratic governance. Nonetheless, both perspectives are critical in developing a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of democracy.

The development of democracy cannot be separated from the development of advanced digital technology, making youths easier to access various information from different sources. From this technology, particularly smartphones, they can easily access social media and other platforms providing information on politics and democracy. The information empowers youths to be more informed and engaged in the democratic process, gaining a more nuanced understanding of political and democratic issues and developing informed opinions. In addition, though their smartphones, they have huge opportunities to get a vast space to participate in various dynamics debated by wider online community (Lecheler & Egelhofer, 2022). Consequently, it increases youth political participation.

Furthermore, accessing political and democratic information from their digital devices is critical for youths' development of democratic literacy—the functioning of a healthy democracy, as it allows them to make informed decisions and hold their leaders accountable. In addition, they can understand updated issues happening and better understand issues contributing to informed discussions with other digital media users.

This current study indicates that the challenges in democratic literacy in the digital era are hoax oases, politician stigmatization, idiot discussion engagement, and political apathy engagement. Hoax oases can make it difficult for individuals to make informed decisions and participate meaningfully in democratic processes. With the rise of social media and online platforms, it has become easier for false information to spread quickly and widely, often to influence public opinion. False information is deliberately created by participants, politicians, or parties whose numbers increasingly appear through online-based alternative media (Lecheler & Egelhofer, 2022). As a result, the spread of political information becomes increasingly biased because this false information seems to still adhere to traditional journalistic norms and values and continues to go through stages of reporting that apply the principles of justice (cover both sides) and accurately (Kovach &; Rosentiel, 2021).

Politician stigmatization can lead to a lack of trust in the political system and make it difficult for individuals to engage with political issues since they evaluate politicians negatively. This can also contribute to political apathy and disengagement. This stereotype can bring negative impacts on political system (Pruysers & Blais as cited in Mansell et al., 2021). In addition, idiot discussion

engagement can be a challenge, as social media users need more access to reliable information sources and are more vulnerable to disinformation and propaganda. Lastly, political apathy engagement is a primary concern, as young people are often less likely to vote or participate in political activities than older generations. This can lead to a lack of representation and disconnection between young people and political decision-making processes.

Moreover, the present study highlights two potential avenues for advancing democratic literacy: information oases and reignite young people participation. In developing democratic literacy, digital media can play a vital role in providing equitable opportunities and rights to young users to obtain information. By leveraging this resource, youths can hold political actors accountable and monitor their work and decisions. Moreover, given the pervasiveness of disinformation and misinformation in contemporary society, there is an urgent need for reliable sources of information that can assist young people in comprehending complex issues and making informed decisions. This necessitates promoting media literacy and critical thinking skills, as well as the creation of platforms that offer objective and impartial information. By advancing these objectives, young people can develop the competencies necessary to navigate a complex and dynamic political landscape, participate meaningfully in democratic processes, and contribute to forming a more equitable and representative society.

An additional avenue for improving democratic literacy is to increase the engagement of young people in political processes by creating opportunities for them to voice their opinions, receive information, and empower them to take action on issues that align with their interests. Such initiatives may include cultivating a sense of personal connection and reliability through humour and representing a more humanized image of political leaders. These approaches can be particularly effective in engaging young people, who often represent a significant proportion of the population. By fostering meaningful engagement and participation from this demographic, politicians can help to promote a more representative and inclusive democracy that addresses the concerns and perspectives of all citizens.

Addressing these challenges and opportunities in democratic literacy requires a multifaceted approach. This can include education and media literacy programs to help youths develop the critical thinking skills to evaluate information and distinguish between facts and hoaxes. It can also involve efforts to improve the transparency and accuracy of information, as well as regulation and enforcement mechanisms to address malicious actors who spread disinformation. Addressing these challenges is critical to preserving the integrity and effectiveness of democratic institutions and processes.

In democratic governance, effectively communicating the reasons for unfulfilled political pledges can constitute a critical determinant in mitigating the loss of trust in the political process. Given the centrality of trust in upholding the legitimacy of democratic institutions, it is incumbent upon political actors to proactively engage in measures that promote transparency and accountability, thereby restoring the public's faith in their leadership. Moreover, the findings of this study underscore the vital role of democratic education in promoting democratic literacy. By acquiring an appreciation of the principles and practices of democracy, citizens can effectively engage with democratic processes and hold their representatives accountable for their actions. In this regard, democratic education represents a critical tool for cultivating an informed and empowered citizenry capable of contributing to developing a vibrant and inclusive democratic culture.

Conclusion

This study highlights the significance of democratic literacy in fostering the effective functioning of a democratic society by emphasizing the importance of digitally enhancing young people's knowledge and skills to actively participate in democratic processes. Four challenges in democratic literacy in the digital era include hoax oases, politician stigmatization, idiot discussion engagement, and political apathy engagement, while two prospective avenues for bolstering democratic literacy are information oases and reigniting young people participation. Addressing the challenges and seizing the opportunities in democratic literacy requires a multifaceted approach to developing critical thinking skills among youths, enabling them to discern accurate information from falsehoods. Ultimately, the study underscores the indispensable role of democratic education

in promoting democratic literacy. By providing citizens with an understanding of democratic principles and practices, democratic literacy empowers individuals to actively engage in democratic processes and hold their representatives accountable.

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