

## Impact of talk shows and variety show television programs viewership on political interest among Indonesian college students

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p><i>Keywords:</i> talk show variety show television use television programs political engagement</p>	<p>Television, with a larger audience than other mass media in Indonesia, can improve youth engagement in politics, or at least their curiosity about politics. Previous studies showed inconclusive results concerning the effects of television viewing and political interest. However, the current study assessed the effect of talk shows and variety show viewership on college students' political interests. A survey was conducted of 400 college students at Universitas Pembangunan Nasional Veteran Jakarta (UPNVJ), Jakarta, Indonesia, using a stratified sampling technique and data analysis with multiple linear regression analysis. The results verified that talk shows and variety show viewership directly relate to the political interest in youth. Variety show viewership has a negative relationship, which means that political interest decreases as viewing of variety show increases. Television use, talk show viewership, and political knowledge positively correlate with political interest. The author suggests a sample from a broader geographical area in the future. Furthermore, the conceptualization of variety shows should be examined more.</p>

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## Introduction

As a form of mainstream mass media, television can depict the mass culture, and those interested in political information can access political information from television. Television also has advantages because news programs with special reports can show current events or calamities, which may support national solidarity (Wang & Louis-Charles, 2017). Television is used more than other mass media in Indonesia. Meanwhile, internet use is the second-highest, followed by radio and newspaper (Lubis, 2019). Television shows condense the message and depict a modern lifestyle different from the audience's life (Yuliantari, 2020).

In Indonesia, studies related to politics among young people are mainly carried out on students. They are representatives of educated youth, and they may represent the future opinion leaders and actual leaders of the near future. Thus, their opinions and interest in politics may be significant. Social media is currently widely used by everyone, including students. On the other hand, studies showed low political involvement among students who used social media (Wibowo et al., 2020), and the use of Twitter has no significant effect on student political involvement (Alaika, 2014).

Meanwhile, the data showing the amount of television use in Indonesia was not supported by the types of television programs consumed. Even so, Ariestaphira (2020) states that students' political attitudes are influenced by television news. Besides, the messages conveyed by television can create political interest for students (Priyanti, 2014). Nevertheless, students' political interest has not been linked to the television program they consume.

Political interest can form an emotional reaction driven by an object around the person or generated by long-term sentiment even though the stimulant aspect is missing

(Tamma, 2021). Young people's lives cannot be detached from information technology, allowing active participation (Adha, Budimansyah, Kartadinata, & Sundawa, 2019). In a cultural context, language and verbal interactions play a role in shaping thoughts (Allami & Barzegar, 2020). So, how communication is designed in a television program will affect the audience's way of thinking. Indeed, people in developing countries still rely on political information from television. For example, increased exposure to talk show programs improves political knowledge, awareness, and participation among college students in Pakistan (Sarwar et al., 2021). Furthermore, a study by Gulenko & Dolgova (2021) found that a few Russian television programs show a high degree of engagement, and the talk show program can influence viewers.

Previous studies looked at the role of television talk shows and comedy show programs in providing information related to politics during the campaign period. Political interest, one of the indicators of political participation, needs to be examined among young people because their involvement in politics is important for a healthy democracy. With its large audience, television can improve youth engagement in politics or at least increase their curiosity about politics. The numerous programs provided by television can relay political messages to their audience. Television can be a means of political communication through talk show programs. In addition, variety show programs with a broad audience can function in the same way. According to the Indonesia Broadcasting Commission (Indonesia, 2019), talk shows and variety shows are considered factual programs. The understanding of factual programs refers to broadcast programs that present facts.

The lack of studies on the relationship between television program viewership and political interest, especially in Indonesia,

prompted the authors to conduct this research to evaluate the role of talk show and variety show viewership on students' political interests. The three television programs selected were the three with the highest ratings based on a survey conducted by the Indonesian Broadcasting Commission (Indonesia, 2019). The studied talk show programs included *Mata Najwa*, *Indonesia Lawyer Club*, and *Kick Andy*. Meanwhile, variety show programs included *Opera van Java*, *Pesbukers*, and *Family 100*.

## Method

For this research, data was collected via a survey conducted from November 8 to November 19, 2021. The questionnaire consisted of a series of questions that 400 respondents were asked to answer during lecture time on campus. A stratified sample was used based on the percentage of students each year at Universitas Pembangunan Nasional Veteran Jakarta (UPNVJ) Communications Department, Jakarta, Indonesia. The sampling process was carried out randomly from each class (year) amount 100 students regardless of the student's gender. So from four categories (year), a total of 400 students is obtained. The data from the completed questionnaires were processed and analysed using SPSS 25. The research sample (400) included 150 males (37.5%) and 250 females (62.5%), with an average age of 19.7 years, a minimum age of 17 years old, and a maximum of 23 years old ( $SD=1.34$ ). Experts measured the face validity of the instrument to check fully representative of each item and by selected students to understand the items or if there were ambiguities.

The measurement of each variable is as follows: 1) Political Interest. The respondents were asked about their ability to pay attention to politics (Lupia & Philpot, 2005) to measure their level of interest in

“information on what is going on in politics” related to national and local issues. The answers ranged from “not at all interested” (1) to “very interested” (5). These elements were calculated on a single scale of interest using two variables: interest in national and interest in local political issues (Mean=2.91,  $SD=0.80$ ,  $\alpha=.77$ ). 2) Political knowledge. This variable is part of political interest. Political knowledge questions involved: (1) the name of the chairman of the Indonesian parliament, (2) the party supporting the presidential candidates in the 2019 Indonesian elections, (3) the cabinet of President Jokowi, and (4) the name of the Indonesian Foreign Minister. Correct answers had a value of 1, and incorrect answers had a value of 0; therefore, the maximum possible score was 4. The total value was measured for all four questions (Mean=2.38,  $SD=1.23$ ,  $\alpha=.70$ ). 3) Television Use. Respondents were asked how many days a week they watch television on national TV, local TV, and cable TV that contained political information. The answers ranged from never (1) to every day (5). They were also asked how many hours, on average, they watched television related to political information in a day. The answers ranged from never (1) to more than 3 hours (5). Television use was calculated as the mean of these two questions (days watched and hours per day) (Groshek & Krongard, 2016) and had a mean of 1.86 out of a maximum of 5 ( $SD=0.51$ ,  $\alpha=.70$ ).

The television programs in this study are talk shows and variety shows. The measurements of each are as follows; 1) Talk Show Viewership. Respondents were presented with a list of three television programs identified on the questionnaire as providing political information. The three television programs selected were based on the three programs with the highest talk show ratings based on a survey conducted by the Indonesian Broadcasting Commission (Indonesia, 2019). These television programs

are Mata Najwa, Indonesia Lawyer Club, and Kick Andy. Measurements evaluated each of the programs in this category regularly viewed by the respondents. Respondents were asked how often they watch each talk show television program listed. The answers ranged from never (1) to often (3). Talk show viewership was calculated as the mean of these three questions (the talk show programs). Talk show viewership was 1.97 and SD 0.69 ( $\alpha=.71$ ). 2) Variety Show Viewership. Respondents were provided with three television programs listed as providing entertainment content. The question is based on the three programs with the highest ratings among variety shows, according to the ratings of the Indonesian Broadcasting Commission. These television programs are Opera van Java, Pesbukers, and Family 100. Opera van Java and Pesbukers present conversations interspersed with humor that is slightly related to developing political issues, while Family 100 is a quiz show with questions sometimes associated with political issues. How often each of the listed regularly watched variety programs by the respondents was used as a measurement. Answers were graded from never (1) to often (3). Variety show viewership was calculated as the average of these three questions (variety show programs). Variety shows viewership had mean and SD values of 0.99 and 1.09 ( $\alpha=.73$ ).

## Results and Discussion

### *Usage of television programs*

People may access political information from the media based on news and current affairs. Television has become an important channel for campaigns and education, encouraging citizen participation in state matters and socio-cultural activities. Nettleton (2015) suggests that political learning requires that the media address

its obligations to audiences. Television can attract a broad audience through a mix of entertainment and information programs. There is a correlation between political engagement and news preference (Quintelier & Hooghe, 2011). The growth of sensationalist news could explain the declining confidence in the news media in many countries (Kleemans, Hendriks, Beentjes, & Eisinga, 2017). There is a positive relationship between watching political talk shows on television channels and civic involvement and politics among young people (Mushtaq & Baig, 2015).

The rise of political entertainment sources is not a new phenomenon; scholarly arguments have centered on soft news, which combines political information with entertainment (Brants & Katrin, 2011). Political entertainment study around the world appears to be a jumble; works in entertainment media are being evaluated for their political influence (McCombs, Holbert, Kiousis, & Wanta, 2011).

The influence of television talk shows has been different in various areas, making it difficult to draw a firm conclusion on the importance of talk show-related entertainment. Talk shows cultivate political efficacy (Iftikhar, Sultana, & Tanveer, 2021), but they do not affect social development (Sarkar & Bosri, 2017). On the other hand, political talk shows had a relationship with political awareness (Mamdani, Yasin, & Siddiqui, 2018). Talk show exposure is positively correlated with trust in politicians among people who have low political knowledge; however, it negatively affects those who have good knowledge (Boukes & Boomgaarden, 2016). Consequently, the need to pursue this issue further has become significantly more important because young people need to become politically involved to help solve society's challenges (Wray-Lake, 2019). The talk show program's attractiveness is due to the topics covered,

engaging sources, and communication developed by the presenter (Wibowo, 2009). A variety show is a television program with varied types of acts that combine humor, music, modification of stage settings, and various other additional elements (Set, 2008). Variety shows must be able to harmonize various acts in an exciting program.

### *Political interest and television use*

Traditional news media influences news consumption and stimulates political knowledge and interest (David, 2009). Backhaus (2019) said that transfer systems and existing knowledge communication might lead to broader societal advancement with social change initiatives. Awareness of politics encourages pro-democracy engagement, such as political interest, as people will discover issues and problems that are politically important (Carpini & Keeter, 1997).

Previous work has established a positive relationship between news media use and political interest. Selective exposure research has shown that individuals usually prefer political information that suits their views and avoid strange and unfamiliar knowledge (Garrett, Carnahan, & Lynch, 2013; Zillmann & Bryant, 2013). Prior (2010) claimed that political interest is the most crucial political behavior indicator that makes democracy work. Political knowledge is partly a function of political interest and a critical factor in understanding democratic citizenship and political engagement (Carpini & Keeter, 1997). A lack of skill in processing political information results in limited media effects on interest attributed to less choice of entertainment programming with political content (Lecheler & de Vreese, 2017).

Political interest is one predictor of broader concepts, such as political involvement (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995; Park, 2004). Larsen (2020) stated that

political interests are stable because they are rooted in personality dispositions, but short-term changes can occur based on the political environment. Deth (1989) describes the word “political interest” as the degree to which politics excites a person’s attention. Individual interest requires significant knowledge of a subject and valuation of that knowledge (Renninger, 2000). Prior (2010) addressed political interest stability and showed that political interest is very stable throughout life and that political interest must be established in adolescence. He also emphasized the importance of understanding how young adults develop political interests.

The Uses and Dependency model states that users choose and use the media to fulfil their goals. The desire to get more information about politics will make a person more dependent on the media; thus, the media is more likely to influence someone’s political interest. The influence of watching television on political interest (Strömbäck & Shehata, 2019) then becomes the basis for considering the role of television use in this study. Television use is the activity of users watching television related to politics regardless of the program.

Moreover, (Morrisan, 2008) states that a television channel’s success depends on building individual programs that encourage viewers to listen. Viewership refers to the viewers who watch a television program. In this study, talk show and variety show viewership demonstrate the choice and frequency of viewing that viewers regularly make without considering psychological factors such as audience involvement and attention to television content.

Variety shows are produced to meet the audience’s entertainment demands. Unlike prior presentations, which were combative and staged, many of the shows included human values and emotions. Despite the popularity of newly introduced television

programs from the West, Eastern media producers tried engagingly presenting local culture. Differences in viewing habits, cultural traditions, and social structures between western and eastern countries have resulted in the program’s format. Variety shows mix dramas, documentaries, and informational programming that have no set format in Indonesia.

**Hypotheses**

Uses and gratification theory acknowledges the audience as an active user in their media choices, associating requirements gratification. Media use is examined as particularly meaningful for understanding political engagement. Thus, we expect that television program viewership students will advance a stronger interest in politics. The following hypotheses were proposed where television use refers to the amount of time spent watching per day and the number of days they watch in a week; variety show and talk show viewership refers to how often they watch the three programs in the relevant category.

H1 : Television use influences the political interest of audiences.

H2 : Variety show viewership influences the political interest of television audiences.

H3 : Talk show viewership influences the political interest of television audiences.

The following hypotheses were made to examine how to program viewership moderates the relationships:

H4 : Variety show viewership moderates the relationship between television use and political interest.

H5 : Talk show viewership moderates the relationship between television use and political interest.

**Output analysis**

The description of students’ viewing activities related to political information on television can be seen in Table 1. Table 1 shows that 195 students watch political information on television for one to two days per week, and 19 watch it every day; further, 235 students watch less than one hour of political information per day; 2 students watch more than one hour three hours per day.

**Table 1. Viewing Activities of Students**

Viewing Activities	Never	1-2 days	3-4 days	5-6 days	Everyday
Watch National TV in a Week	68 (17%)	195 (49%)	100 (25%)	18 (4%)	19 (5%)
Average Hours of Watch TV in a Day	Never	Less than 1 hour	Between 1 and 2 hours	2 to 3 hours	More than 3 hours
	36 (9%)	235 (58%)	96 (24%)	31 (8%)	2 (1%)

Source: Field Research. N=400.

The analysis was conducted to test the five hypotheses about the relationship between television use and political interest. The use of linear regression equations sets political interest as the dependent variable. Furthermore, in the first model, the independent variable includes sex, age, television use, and political knowledge. The second model was made by adding talk shows and variety show viewership. In the third model, the interaction variable is used to see if the two variables moderate the relationship between television use and political interest.

Table 2 shows the results of the two models. The first model displays sex

**Table 2. Regression Model of Political Interest**

	Model I					Model II				
	B	Beta	T	Sig.	VIP	B	Beta	t	Sig.	VIP
Sex	-.078	-.047	-.941	.347	1.068	-.022	-.013	-.259	.796	1.129
Age	-.042	-.070	-1.398	.163	1.066	-.044	-.073	-1.465	.144	1.067
Knowledge	.086**	.133	2.640	.009	1.080	.083**	.127	2.535	.012	1.096
TV use	.256**	.213	4.345	.000	1.021	.226**	.188	3.764	.000	1.077
Talk show						.084*	.098	1.923	.055	1.117
Variety show						-.089**	-.124	-2.453	.015	1.108
Constant	3.109		4.893	.000		3.074		4.831	.000	
Adjusted-R <sup>2</sup>	6.4%					7.9%				
N	400					400				

a. *Dependent Variable: Political interest.*

b. *Predictors: (Constant), Sex, Age, Knowledge, TV use, Talk show, Variety show.*

\*\* $p < .05$ ; \* $p < .1$

Source: Field Research

**Table 3. Regression Model of Political Interest with Interaction Effects**

	Model III				
	B	Beta	T	Sig.	VIP
Sex	-.015	-.009	-.180	.857	1.137
Age	-.040	-.067	-1.350	.178	1.077
Knowledge	.077**	.119	2.354	.019	1.106
TV use	.132*	.109	1.679	.095	2.421
Talk show	.103*	.325	1.888	.060	4.689
Variety show	-.309**	-.432	-2.528	.012	3.252
TV x Talk	.083	.097	.579	.563	2.386
TV x Variety	3.215		4.837	.000	
Constant	8.2%				
Adjusted-R <sup>2</sup>	400				
N					

a. *Dependent Variable: Political interest*

b. *Predictors: (Constant), Sex, Age, Knowledge, TV use, Talk show, Variety show, TV x Talk, TV x Variety.*

\*\* $p < .05$ ; \* $p < .1$

Source: Field Research

and age as control variables that had no significant influence on political interest, while television use ( $b = .256$  and  $p = .000$ ) and political knowledge ( $b = .086$  and  $p = .009$ ) significantly influenced political interest. These results support H1. The first model shows that television use affects political interest.

The second model shows that talk and variety show viewership significantly

influence political interest. Talk show viewership has a value of  $b = .084$  and  $p = .055$ , while variety show viewership has a value of  $b = -.089$  and  $p = .015$ , supporting H2 and H3. The negative value with variety show viewership suggests that the more significant the frequency of variety shows viewed, the lower the political interest level. This model suggests that political interest rises with the increasing use of television. ( $b = .226$  and  $p = .000$ ).

We created the third model in Table 3 to check the presence of talk show and variety show viewership as a moderating variable so that interaction between television use and program viewership in the model was included. The third model shows no moderation variable; H4 and H5 were rejected. The significant influence of political knowledge on political interests is reasonable. Talk show ( $p=.060$ ) and variety show ( $p=.012$ ) viewership directly influence political interest, not as a moderating variable. The third model has an Adjusted-R<sup>2</sup> of 8.2% and showed the variation in the dependent variable, which is collectively described by the independent variables.

There is a simple test to check multicollinearity in a regression model. The VIP (variance inflation factor) determines the strength of a correlation between independent variables and classifies that correlation. The VIP value ranges between 1 and 5 (Table 2 and Table 3); this condition indicates that the variables are moderately correlated. Variables with small VIP values indicate no problem with collinearity (Shrestha, 2020).

Completing the multicollinearity assumption was met, and the normal residual assumption must also be fulfilled by regression. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov residual normality test yielded a significance value of 0.079, with a  $p$ -value (0.079) more than .05; it is stated that the data distribution fits the residual normality assumption. Further, the Durbin-Watson test is performed for the assumption of independent (uncorrelated) residuals, and the value is 1.937; this number indicates that the assumption of independent (uncorrelated) residuals is met. The last assumption is linearity between independent and dependent variables. The linearity test was produced from the ANOVA (Analysis of Variance). Each independent variable's relation with the dependent variable (Political Interest) exhibited a significant 'deviation

from normality' value; these values were greater than 0.05. The result demonstrated that the regression's linearity assumption was met.

This study assesses the relationship between television talk shows and variety show viewership on students' political interests. The first model (Table 2) shows that sex and age do not affect political interest. The use of sex and age refers to many previous political behavior studies. The insignificance of sex in political interest is consistent with previous research (Bittner & Goodyear-Grant, 2017).

Students actively choose to watch television programs to meet their information needs and determine the program's type to be their preference. Television use and the preferred program are related to students' political interests. Television use and political knowledge both significantly influence political interest. These results confirm previous studies; Holt, Shehata, Stromback, & Ljungberg, 2013)). The results show that talk shows and variety show significantly influence political interest. The more variety shows consumed by the respondents, the less their political interest. This result is different from previous findings, which found a positive relationship with entertainment shows (Baum, 2003). The three variety shows included in our study do not specifically discuss politics but do include light and funny discussions associated with political issues.

In contrast, Baum's study examines entertainment that focuses on the content of foreign crises from an American perspective, such as the Persian Gulf War, and interviews with military experts and soldiers' families. The third model shows that the talk show and variety show viewership do not moderate the relationship between television use and political interest. On the other hand, the impact of television watching on political interest has been established; Dimitrova,



Daniela, Strömbäck, Shehata, & Nord (2014) found a reciprocal effect between television news viewing political interest. Longitudinal studies are needed to confirm causal inference.

This study shows that students are more interested in local political issues. The survey was conducted in Jakarta, which is the capital of Indonesia. This finding indicates that students are less interested in national issues than local ones that directly affect them. A previous study by Intyaswati et al. (2021) found that political information from television affected voting decisions for students in West Java, Indonesia.

Social learning theory states that a person can learn through observation and direct experience. Effective social learning could be obtained through mass media, such as television. Mass media can transmit new mindsets simultaneously to large groups of people, and the impact of media occurs through social learning. In the learning process, a person involves attention, storage, reproduction, and affirmation. In this study, watching talk shows and variety shows on television proved to provide social learning about politics for students, although this learning can have positive or adverse effects.

## Conclusion

This study indicates that the influences on political interest among students are the frequency of television use related to political information, the frequency of talk shows regularly viewed, the frequency of variety shows regularly viewed, and political knowledge level. A talk show and variety show viewership are not moderators but variables directly related to political interest.

The novelty of the study results is that they break down categories of television shows in terms of their political impact on their users, whereas earlier studies looked at the usage of television in general in terms of

its political impact on its users. Furthermore, the detrimental influence of variety show programming on political interest is a novel discovery that requires additional investigation.

One of the study's limitations is that all respondents are students from the same college. However, students of the Universitas Pembangunan Nasional Veteran Jakarta (UPNVJ) come from various regions in Indonesia. Further research should be conducted for more comprehensive results, which may use a sample from a broader geographical area. The relationship between television program consumption and political interest among university students who are representatives of educated youth can at least become knowledgeable about political communication through television. Further research can develop existing limitations. Moreover, the conceptualization of a variety show needs to be more fully assessed as a possible way to explain the differences in existing research results, as different variety shows may include different amounts and types of political content.

## Declaration of Ownership

This article is our original work.

## Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest to declare in this article.

## Ethical Clearance

This study was approved by the institution.

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