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Political information exposure in the 2024 Indonesian election: The case of Indonesian students in India

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ABSTRACT

This study explores how exposure to political information through social media influences Indonesian students in India in the 2024 Presidential Election. This study uses a mixed methods approach, combining a quantitative survey of 41 students with in-depth interviews to gain a more comprehensive understanding. Data were collected through online questionnaires and focus group discussions, then analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques and thematic analysis. The results show that Instagram and YouTube are the leading platforms for political information, with 56% of respondents stating that they trust the content they consume. This exposure does not necessarily change political preferences but contributes to increasing political awareness, strengthening digital literacy, and fostering critical thinking. The uniqueness of this study lies in its focus on diaspora students, who are relatively rarely touched upon in the literature on digital politics in Indonesia. Unlike domestic voters who are often influenced by viral issues, Indonesian students in India exhibit more reflective information consumption patterns, influenced by their transnational experiences. These findings confirm that social media functions as a cross-border digital democracy space, highlighting the importance of strengthening digital literacy to ensure more conscious, reflective, and quality political participation among the diasporas.

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Introduction

The rapid advancement of the digital age has transformed social media into a powerful tool for disseminating information at unprecedented speeds. The landscape of modern democracy has also adapted, evolving in various forms under the influence of digitalization. Electoral contests now take on a different tone in each cycle, as the shift from conventional media to digital platforms presents new challenges for candidates competing in the 2024 elections (Ismawan, Safrina,& Zain, 2024; Nelimarkka, Laaksonen, Tuokko, & Valkonen, 2020; Stier, Bleier, Lied, & Strohmaier, 2018). The process of political communication channeled through social media is understood as an interactive process, in which individuals convey stimuli in the form of symbols, language, or non-verbal cues to influence the behavior of others (Gallardo, 2019; Horowid, Nieminen, & Schejter, 2020; Nesterenko, Miskiewicz, & Abazov, 2023; Pronchev, 2022; Rasmi Musa, 2023; Suprapto, 2009).

Social media has revolutionized the way political information is conveyed and received. Campaign promises and political narratives are now easier to disseminate and can even be immediately tested and questioned by voters. It marks a significant shift in the interaction pattern between presidential and vice-presidential candidates and their constituents (Jungherr, Rivero, & Gayo-Avello, 2020). Regardless of the extent to which voters' responses are acknowledged or ignored, social media has proven to be a new force in building interactive political communication. This transformation has made social media a channel of information and an arena for political discourse. The dominance of social media in shaping public opinion, mobilizing support, and disseminating valid and false information further confirms its position as a strategic space in contemporary democracy (Coleman, 2017). With its broad reach and precision, social media can even surpass the influence of conventional media (Chen, Chen, & Xia, 2022; M. Liu, Bi, Yang, Qu, & Wang, 2021; Oh, Lee, & Han, 2021; Zheng, Su, Luo, & Liu-Lastres, 2023).

The high penetration of social media is even more relevant in the Indonesian context. As of January 2024, there were approximately 139 million active social media users, or 49.9% of the national population. Indonesia is also among the countries with the most significant number of social media users in the world (Algifari & Nugroho, 2023; Kusyanti, Puspa, Rahma, & April, 2018; Miranti, Rewindinar, & Andrian, 2024; Sokowati, 2019). This condition shows how central the role of social media is in the daily lives of Indonesians, both as a means of communication, public opinion formation, and a political arena. For the 2024 elections, the existence of social media has encouraged

presidential and vice-presidential candidates (PPWP) to shift their communication patterns from traditional campaign methods to digital strategies that are more responsive to the dynamics of cyberspace.

The role of social media in the global context is increasingly essential for diaspora voters. Indonesian students abroad, including in India, are a group that is highly dependent on social media to access political and electoral information. Social media's speed, reach, and interactivity make it a vital instrument for students far from their homeland. They use these platforms to obtain information about candidates, their visions and missions, and strategic national issues that arise during the election process (Sarıkaya, 2023; Widayat et al., 2022). This situation has encouraged candidates to adjust their political communication strategies, because although the diaspora vote is relatively small, it has significant symbolic meaning in reflecting the quality of Indonesian democracy in the eyes of the world.

However, most previous studies on digital politics in Indonesia have emphasized the dynamics of domestic campaigns, the behavior of domestic voters, and the phenomenon of hoaxes and disinformation spreading in the national public sphere (Coleman, 2017; Jungherr et al., 2020). Few studies have paid attention to the experiences of the diaspora, especially students, who are in a unique position as transnational voters and actors living in a socio-political environment that is different from their homeland. On the other hand, studies that highlight the diaspora more often emphasize the institutional aspects of overseas elections or the logistics of organizing voting, rather than how social media influences the political awareness and preferences of young voters abroad (Huskey, 2023; Szulecki, Kotnarowski, & Ben Stanley, 2023; Wellman & Whitaker, 2021). In other words, there is a knowledge gap regarding the role of social media in shaping the information consumption patterns and political participation of Indonesian students studying in India.

The uniqueness of this study lies in its focus on student voters as part of the Indonesian diaspora in India. They are a relatively educated group that is critical of the flow of information, but at the same time, highly dependent on social media to stay connected with political developments in their homeland. This position makes them the perfect social laboratory to test the extent to which social media not only disseminates information, but also influences their political awareness, critical attitudes, and motivation to exercise their right to vote. Using a mixed methods approach, this study seeks to fill the gap in previous research by presenting a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between exposure to political information on social media and the participation of Indonesian students abroad in elections.

This research departs from a key question: to what extent does social media influence Indonesian student voters in India during the 2024 Presidential Election, regarding access to information, the formation of political awareness, and the strengthening of critical attitudes towards campaign narratives? This question also affirms the contribution of this research in expanding the discourse on digital democracy in Indonesia, not only in the domestic context, but also in the transnational space involving the diaspora.

Method

This study uses a mixed methods approach with a parallel convergent design, a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods conducted simultaneously to obtain

a more complete picture of the phenomenon being studied. This approach was chosen because the research objectives required descriptive-quantitative understanding and interpretive-qualitative understanding, especially to explain how social media influenced Indonesian student voters in India in the 2024 Presidential Election. As explained by Creswell and Creswell (2022), integrating quantitative and qualitative methods allows researchers to overcome the limitations of each approach while producing a more comprehensive understanding of a social phenomenon.

The types of data collected in this study consist of quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data were obtained through the distribution of questionnaires containing closed-ended questions with a scale of choices, designed to measure the duration of daily social media use, the most frequently accessed platforms, the level of trust in political content, and the extent to which exposure to election information influences students' political attitudes and preferences. Qualitative data was obtained through in-depth interviews conducted online with several selected respondents. These interviews aimed to explore students' personal experiences in accessing, filtering, and responding to the flow of political information circulating on social media and reflect on how this exposure shapes their political awareness, critical attitudes, and motivation to participate in elections.

The respondents in this study were Indonesian students pursuing higher education in India, at the undergraduate, master's, and doctoral levels, ranging in age from 17 to 45 years old. Students were chosen as the research subjects because they are a diaspora group that is relatively active in using social media, has a high level of digital literacy, and acts as agents representing Indonesia abroad. Based on data from the Overseas Election Committee (PPLN) in 2024, the number of Indonesian voters registered in India reached 779 people, with around 115 coming from the student community. From this number, this study involved 41 respondents selected through simple random sampling. This number is considered representative of providing an overview of the political behavior of Indonesian students in India while also allowing researchers to explore the data in depth through a combination of quantitative and qualitative instruments.

The data collection process was carried out in three stages. First, a quantitative survey was distributed using Google Forms, given India's vast geographical conditions and the researcher's limited time and resources. This questionnaire mapped the intensity of social media use, the dominant platforms used, and the respondents' level of trust in the political content they consumed. Second, qualitative interviews were conducted online via WhatsApp. These interviews allowed researchers to obtain in-depth narratives about how students understand, interpret, and evaluate the political content they encounter and how this exposure influences their political awareness as part of the Indonesian diaspora. Third, both types of data were analyzed simultaneously through a parallel mixed methods design, so that the quantitative results provided an overview of information exposure trends, while the qualitative results explained the reasons and meanings behind these trends in context (Bennett & Elman, 2007; Elfenbein & Schwarze, 2020).

Quantitative data analysis was conducted through frequency distribution calculations, percentages, and cross-tabulation to identify patterns of social media use and students' level of trust in political information. Meanwhile, qualitative data analysis was conducted using the interactive approach

proposed by Miles and Huberman, namely through the process of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions that are reflective and contextual (Moleong & Surjaman, 1989). The process of integrating quantitative and qualitative data was carried out at the final interpretation stage so that the research results could answer the central question: How does social media influence Indonesian student voters in India in the 2024 Presidential Election?

With this research method design, the study produces statistical data on how often Indonesian students in India access social media and how much they trust the political content circulating. It also provides a deeper understanding of how they interpret this information. Thus, this research can comprehensively explain the influence of social media on the political awareness, critical attitudes, and participation of Indonesian students as transnational voters in the digital democracy process.

Results and Discussion

Indonesia's voting and ballot counting process was conducted simultaneously on February 14, 2024. However, voting abroad was held earlier than the domestic schedule. In India, overseas voting was conducted four days in advance, on February 10, 2024, while the vote counting remained synchronized with the domestic schedule. Two voting methods were employed to implement the overseas election in India: postal voting (POS) and in-person voting at the Overseas Polling Station (TPSLN). The number of registered voters in India's Final Voters List (DPT) reached 779 individuals. These voters are Indonesian citizens who registered with the overseas election committee before the national Final Voters List (DPT) determination stage, which took place at the end of June 2023.

Overseas voting reflects the right of citizens to actively participate as Indonesian nationals living abroad, who, despite not residing in Indonesia, retain the right and opportunity to cast their votes in the democratic process. The diverse geographical distribution of Indonesian citizens abroad presents a unique challenge for election organizers. Therefore, to ensure broader access to the voting process, the Overseas Election Committee (PPLN) provides flexibility by facilitating two voting methods. The postal voting (POS) method offers convenience for voters far from Overseas Polling Stations (TPSLN), while the TPSLN method is designated for those within reachable polling areas to vote in person. With the implementation of these two methods, it is expected that all registered voters listed in the Final Voters List (DPT) will be able to exercise their voting rights properly and on time.

Table 1. Voter distribution data by electoral district

Voting Method	Number of Voters				Total Voters
	PPLN New Delhi		PPLN Mumbai		
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
TSPLN	54	75	30	60	219
POS	54	117	69	320	560
Sum	108	192	99	380	779

Source: Data processed by authors (2025)

The implementation of overseas voting in the General Election by the Overseas Election Committee (PPLN) New Delhi and the Overseas Election Committee (PPLN) Mumbai demonstrates variations in voter participation based on the voting methods used. In the working area of PPLN New Delhi, the Overseas Polling Station (TPSLN) method recorded participation from 54 male and 75 female voters. Meanwhile, PPLN Mumbai reported 30 male and 60 female voters who voted using the TPSLN method. On the other hand, the postal voting method showed a higher level of participation. At PPLN New Delhi, 54 male and 117 female voters voted by post. In PPLN Mumbai, the number of postal voters reached 69 males and 320 females. These figures indicate that the postal voting method tends to be more favored than TPSLN. It suggests that voters are widely dispersed across various regions in India, and are not concentrated in a single area, making it unfeasible to establish physical polling stations (TPSLN) in all locations.

Overall, the total number of registered voters in the two working areas of PPLN in India reached 779 individuals. Specifically, PPLN New Delhi recorded 108 male and 192 female voters, while PPLN Mumbai recorded 99 male and 380 female voters. These voters are dispersed across various states in India, and regarding information dissemination, they still primarily rely on social media.

Quantitative findings: Mapping political preferences and digital media exposure

This quantitative analysis aims to describe the characteristics of the respondents, the primary sources of political information they access, and the influence of social media on the formation and change of their political attitudes in the context of the 2024 Presidential Election. The role of social media in the 2024 election demonstrates a significant impact on the dissemination of political information and voter mobilization. This study unveils critical insights into how voters are influenced by the flow of information on social media. Data collected from student voters in India is analyzed to provide a deeper understanding of data distribution and patterns, reflecting social media's impact on the 2024 presidential election.

Demographic profile of respondents

The demographics of the respondents in this study provide essential background information to understand the factors that may influence how they access political information and form political preferences. The age range of Indonesian students in India reflects their patterns of digital information consumption. Based on the survey results, the student voters consist of individuals pursuing undergraduate (Bachelor's),

Table 2. Age and educational level

No	Age Range	Diploma/S1	S2/S3	Total
1	17 – 24	12	2	14
2	25 – 34	7	16	23
3	35 – 44	0	3	3
4	45 – 54	0	1	1
Total Number of Respondents				41

Source: Data processed by authors (2025)

Table 3. Social media usage time

Social Media Usage Time		
Usage Time	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
< 1 Hour	1	2,44%
1-2 Hours	8	19,51%
2-4 Hours	18	43,90%
4-6 Hours	4	9,76%
>6 Hours	10	24.39%

Source: Data processed by authors (2025)

Master's, and Doctoral degrees, aged 17 to 45 years old.

Most Indonesian student respondents in India fall within the age range of 25–34 years (56.1%). In terms of education, more than half of the respondents (53.7%) are postgraduate students (Master's/Doctoral). There is a noticeable tendency for younger participants (17–24 years) to be associated with undergraduate studies, while those aged 25 and above are more dominant at the postgraduate level. It reflects that most Indonesian students studying in India have previously participated in elections either in Indonesia or abroad, indicating a potentially more profound understanding and exposure to digital political discourse.

Distribution based on social media usage time

The duration of social media usage among Indonesian students abroad in India shows varied results, and this distribution indicates the potential exposure to political information related to the 2024 Presidential Election.

The majority of respondents fall into the moderate usage category (2–4 hours per day: 43.90%) and the high usage segment (≥ 4 hours per day: 34.15%, consisting of 4–6 hours: 9.76% and >6 hours: 24.39%). Conceptually, individuals in the ≥ 4-hour group have a greater opportunity to engage with political content across social media platforms—such as live campaign broadcasts, short-form political clips, and diaspora discourse. This exposure potentially leads to intensified interactions, both informative (e.g., policy programs, debates) and problematic (e.g., misinformation, partisan framing, selective amplification). Meanwhile, the proportion of low-usage users (< 2 hours: 21.95%, including 1–2 hours: 19.51%, and <1 hour: 2.44%) is relatively small, suggesting a minority group with potentially limited exposure to digital political dynamics.

Distribution by education level and social media usage time

Based on the data, there is a noticeable variation in social media usage time

Table 4. Social media usage time among Indonesian students in India

Educational Level	<1 Hour	1-2 Hours	2-4 Hours	4-6 Hours	>6 Hours
Diploma/S1	0%	36,84%	31,58%	21,05%	10,53%
S2/S3	4,55%	4,55%	54,55%	0%	36,36%

Source: Data processed by authors (2024)

Table 5. Percentage of social media platform usage

Platform	Percentage of Social Media Platform Usage
Instagram	68,29%
YouTube	63,41%
Facebook	39,02%
X/Twitter	26,83%

Source: Data processed by authors (2024)

distribution among Indonesian students in India during the 2024 Presidential Election.

Among the Diploma/Bachelor's (S1) group, most respondents (36.84%) reported using social media for 1–2 hours per day, followed by 31.58% who fell into the 2–4 hours per day category. Intensive usage (≥4 hours per day) accounted for 31.58%, consisting of 21.05% using it for 4–6 hours and 10.53% for more than 6 hours. It indicates that the Diploma/S1 group exhibits a relatively balanced distribution of social media usage, with a dominant focus on low to moderate usage.

Among the Master's/Doctoral (S2/S3) group, most respondents (54.55%) fell into the 2–4 hours per day usage category, indicating a relatively high level of social media engagement. Notably, 36.36% of this group reported using social media for more than 6 hours daily. Low usage (<2 hours) was minimal at only 9.1% (4.55% for 1 hour and 4.55% for 1–2 hours). Overall, the S2/S3 group demonstrates a more intensive exposure level than the Diploma/S1 group. Due to their more extended social media usage, S2/S3 students have a higher potential to encounter political content—ranging from campaign materials and candidate debates to cross-platform political discussions. In contrast, Diploma/S1 students, who predominantly use social media for 1–2 hours daily, tend to have a more limited exposure window, though they are still exposed to some extent.

Distribution of social media usage percentage

The social media usage of Indonesian students abroad in India is viewed from the percentage calculated based on the total number of respondents using each platform. Respondents were allowed to choose more than one social media platform.

On average, respondents used two social media platforms as sources of political information. During the 2024 Presidential Election, the pattern of political exposure among Indonesian students shifted toward platforms with open algorithmic feeds and audiovisual content. A total of 68.29% of respondents used Instagram, followed by 63.41% who accessed YouTube. These two platforms offer political exposure primarily

Table 6. Percentage of social media trust information

No	Trust in Information	Percentage
1	Trust	56%
2	Uncertain	27%
3	Distrust	12%
4	No response	5%

Source: Data processed by authors (2024)

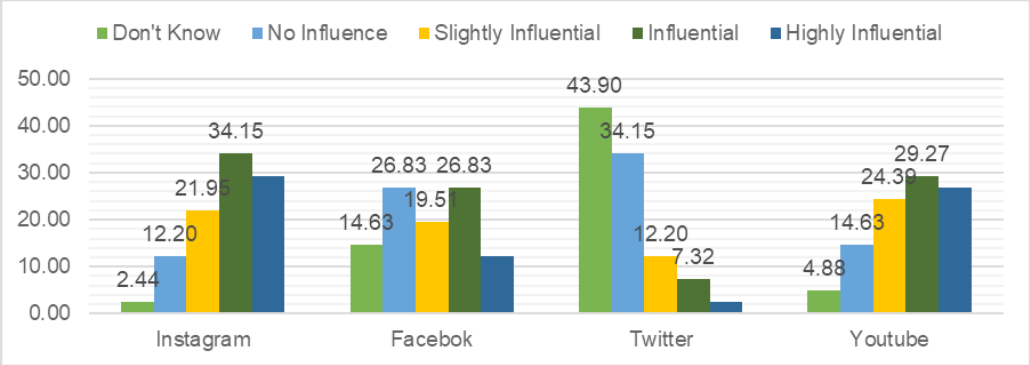


Figure 1. Influence of 2024 presidential election content on social media

Source: Data processed by authors (2024)

through visual and video content easily disseminated across multiple platforms. Instagram and YouTube continue to dominate among student users, indicating that these platforms serve as the primary sources of political information for Indonesian students abroad, particularly in India. Facebook (39.02%) and X/Twitter (26.83%) were used less frequently but were still important spaces for political discussion and timely information updates.

Impact of social media on political decision-making

Based on the data, out of 41 Indonesian student respondents in India, 56% said they trusted the political information related to the 2024 presidential election they received via social media. Meanwhile, 12% of respondents expressed distrust, 27% were uncertain, and 5% did not provide an answer. These results indicate that most students tend to place trust in political information shared via social media. A total of 27% expressed uncertainty, suggesting that some students remain skeptical about the objectivity of the online political content, while 12% reported a lack of trust. The relatively high level of trust (56%) highlights the role of social media as one of the primary channels for disseminating political information among Indonesian students abroad in India. However, doubt and distrust also indicate that students do not fully accept political information without first evaluating its credibility. Furthermore, Indonesian students in India demonstrate varying characteristics and responses to the influence of social media. Although these variations are not statistically significant, they reflect differences in how students' access, process, and respond to political content encountered on social media platforms.

The findings of this study show that although 56% of students stated that they believed political information on social media, this level of trust was not blind. Students combined this trust with a critical attitude, for example, by cross-checking information or only following accounts that were considered credible. The high level of trust among students in political information on social media demonstrates the relevance of the concept of digital democracy, in which social media acts as an arena for the formation of competitive and open political opinion (Aytac, 2024; Jennings, Suzuki, & Hubbard, 2021; Yilmaz, Akbarzadeh, Abbasov, & Bashirov, 2025). However, as stated by Coleman (2017), this trust also poses challenges, namely the risk

of being trapped in misinformation. In this context, Indonesian students in India exhibit relatively selective behavior, emphasizing the importance of digital literacy as a determining factor in the quality of political participation (Bimber, Cunill, Copeland, & Gibson, 2015).

The uniqueness of this study lies in its focus on Indonesian students in India as a segment of the diaspora voters that has been relatively neglected in academic studies on digital politics in Indonesia. Most previous studies have emphasized domestic voters' behavior, candidates' campaign strategies within the country, or issues of disinformation circulating in the national public sphere (Coleman, 2017; Jungherr et al., 2020). This study shows that digital space also plays a vital role for citizens outside the territorial boundaries. Indonesian students in India occupy a unique position because, on the one hand, they have emotional and political ties to their homeland, while on the other hand, they live in a different social, cultural, and political ecosystem. This dual position results in a transnational perspective in accessing and interpreting political information. Thus, this study shows that the diaspora is not merely a passive recipient of political information but a reflective actor that bridges global experiences and Indonesian democracy.

Influence of 2024 presidential election content on social media

This data was obtained from a perception survey in which respondents assessed, in general terms, the content presented on social media platforms. The analysis reveals that the influence of 2024 presidential election content among Indonesian students in India varied across different social media platforms.

Instagram emerged as the most influential social media platform in shaping respondents' political perceptions during the 2024 presidential election. A total of 34.15% of respondents stated that content on Instagram "influenced" them, while 29.27% reported being "highly influenced." On the other hand, 21.95% felt "slightly influenced" by the platform, 12.20% reported no influence, and only 2.44% were uncertain. YouTube ranked as the second most influential platform, with 29.27% of respondents reporting being influenced and 26.83% highly influenced. Additionally, 24.39% indicated slight influence, 14.63% reported no influence, and 4.88% stated that they did not know.

Facebook and X/Twitter have relatively lower influence. On Facebook, only 26.83% of respondents reported being influenced, 12.20% reported being highly influenced, while 26.83% stated they were not influenced, 19.51% felt slightly influenced, and 14.63% were unsure. Twitter/X demonstrated the lowest influence, with only 7.32% of respondents feeling influenced and 2.44% highly influenced, while the majority reported not being influenced (34.15%) or were unsure (43.90%).

Qualitative insights: Context of the 2024 Indonesian election abroad

The 2024 presidential election was conducted domestically and abroad to accommodate the voting rights of Indonesian citizens residing overseas. The 2024 election marks the fifth implementation of a direct voting process in the presidential election. Overseas voting is conducted by the Overseas Election Committee (PPLN) in accordance with Law Number 7 of 2023. The Overseas Election Committee (PPLN) serves as an extension of the General Elections Commission of the Republic of Indonesia (KPU-RI) abroad to carry out electoral duties

(KPU RI, 2024). Due to the vast territory of India, the Overseas Election Committee (PPLN) is divided into two working areas: PPLN New Delhi and PPLN Mumbai.

These jurisdictions are determined based on the accreditation areas of the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia (KBRI) in New Delhi and the Consulate General of the Republic of Indonesia (KJRI) in Mumbai. The implementation of overseas voting has become a particular point of interest for Indonesian citizens (WNI) in India, especially students who have obtained their voting rights in the 2024 election. The presidential and vice-presidential candidate pairs (PPWP) strategically set electoral targets encompassing all voter segments within the country and the Indonesian diaspora abroad. Although the number of votes from overseas is relatively small compared to domestic votes, its influence is significant as it reflects the quality of Indonesian democracy in the eyes of the international community.

The participation of Indonesian citizens in overseas voting reflects a strong commitment to advancing democratic practices. Facilitating citizens' voting rights abroad represents a manifestation of the continuity of democracy in shaping the nation's future direction. Electoral contestation and competition occur intensely within the country and extend beyond its borders, where Indonesian citizens actively engage in political developments and demonstrate their participation in the democratic process. Overseas campaigns are characterized mainly by disseminating information through social media, providing an opportunity for presidential and vice-presidential candidate pairs (PPWP) to interact with the Indonesian diaspora, listen to their aspirations, and explain the policy programs they intend to implement if elected.

Overseas voting indicates that Indonesia values and recognizes the voting rights and participation of its citizens residing abroad. In this context, the Overseas Election Committee (PPLN) plays a critical role in ensuring the smooth execution of the electoral process, maintaining transparency, and upholding compliance with regulations governing overseas elections. The presence of PPLN New Delhi and PPLN Mumbai is expected to enhance voter participation among Indonesians in India, while guaranteeing that all stages of the election are conducted in an orderly and democratic manner, in line with the fundamental principles of elections upheld by the state.

The 2024 Concurrent General Election in India involved a total of 779 registered voters listed in the Final Voter List (DPT). This number was divided between two working areas: the Overseas Election Committee (PPLN) New Delhi, which covered 300 voters, and PPLN Mumbai, which accounted for 479 voters. Indonesian diaspora voters were dispersed across nearly all districts in India, with notable concentrations in several cities. The demographic profile of voters in India reflects a diverse range of backgrounds, dominated by three primary groups: homemakers, professionals, and students. Each group plays a distinct role in the electoral process.

Homemakers, for instance, manage household responsibilities and ensure family well-being abroad while remaining attentive to domestic political issues. Professionals, often employed in sectors such as information technology, trade, and services, make significant contributions to both the Indonesian and Indian economies; politically, despite their busy schedules, they remain engaged with domestic issues, particularly those related to economic and bilateral relations. Students, pursuing higher

education at various institutions across India, represent a dynamic and educated segment that brings a global perspective to the electoral process. While politically aware of a broad range of issues, students tend to place greater emphasis on matters related to education and career opportunities.

Perceptions of political information on social media

This section aims to provide a deeper understanding of how Indonesian students in India experience, interpret, and respond to the information they encountered during the 2024 general election, particularly regarding presidential election content on social media. In the 2024 election, social media emerged as one of the primary channels for disseminating electoral information, especially for presidential and vice-presidential candidate pairs (PPWP) to convey political messages. Several platforms, including Facebook, Twitter/X, Instagram, and YouTube, significantly spread election-related content to a broad audience. Social media's rise has shifted traditional media's function as the primary source of information for many voters. However, the rapid circulation of election content on social media has resulted in an absence of filtering mechanisms, exposing voters to accurate and inaccurate political information. Despite this challenge, Indonesian voters abroad, particularly in India, continue to rely heavily on social media as their primary source of information.

This finding also reinforces Wahid (2015) view that the development of the internet and new media has changed the pattern of political interaction from physical to digital. However, in the context of the diaspora, the digitization of political interaction also serves as a means of cross-border connectivity. It broadens the horizon of digital democracy theory, in which public space is no longer understood as geographically limited but as transnational.

Selectivity and trust in information

Most Indonesian students in India exhibit a relatively high level of trust in political information accessed through social media. This trust is shaped by several factors, including accessibility, the speed of information dissemination, and the ease of interaction and discussion on social media platforms. In this regard, social media is not merely perceived as an alternative channel of information but has also significantly displaced the role of conventional media in distributing information. Its dominant role has positioned social media as a primary medium for disseminating information and shaping political opinions, particularly in the lead-up to the 2024 presidential and vice-presidential election (PPWP).

The high level of trust in social media has positioned it as a highly strategic platform for delivering political messages. Candidates in the 2024 presidential and vice-presidential race (PPWP) recognized this phenomenon and actively prioritized digital campaigning as one of the main instruments in their political communication strategies. This approach was evident in the extensive use of social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, and X/Twitter, which were utilized to convey visions, missions, and policy programs, build political image, and respond to emerging issues in real time. The information consumption patterns among Indonesian students abroad, particularly in India, demonstrate a clear tendency to rely on social media as a trusted source of political information.

The information consumption pattern that leads to high trust in social media cannot be separated from students' selective and

critical attitudes in filtering information. This tendency includes fact-checking information from trusted sources or consuming political content only from credible social media accounts. Such selectivity and critical evaluation also contribute to a degree of neutrality or skepticism toward political information on social media. Although the percentage of distrust remains relatively low, this phenomenon reflects that some students are still uncertain about the objectivity of circulating political information. The relatively high level of trust indicates that social media has successfully become one of the main channels for disseminating political information among Indonesian students in India.

Nevertheless, doubt or distrust demonstrates that students do not entirely accept information without prior evaluation. Furthermore, Indonesian students in India exhibit variations across groups, each with distinct characteristics and responses to the influence of social media. Although these differences are not highly significant, they reflect diversity in how students' access, process, and respond to political information from social media.

These findings are consistent with the digital literacy theoretical framework that emphasizes the importance of individuals' ability to access, select, and evaluate information in the era of data overload (Bimber et al., 2015). The high level of trust among students in political information on social media does not necessarily lead to passive acceptance but is combined with a selective and critical attitude in interpreting the content they consume. This pattern reinforces the argument that digital literacy is an important mediating factor in digital democracy (Chen et al., 2022; B. F. Liu, Fraustino, & Jin, 2016). When compared to the research by Saud, Ida, Mashud, Yousaf, and Ashfaq (2023), which found that young voters in Indonesia tend to be more reactive to viral political issues. Indonesian students in India tend to reflect more deeply before determining their political stance. It reinforces the understanding that the diaspora context, with students' transnational experiences, results in different patterns of political information consumption from domestic voters.

Compared to the research by Saud, Ida, Mashud, Yousaf, and Ashfaq (2023), which found that young voters in Indonesia are more susceptible to the virality effect of political issues, Indonesian students in India actually display more reflective behavior and tend not to rush into absorbing campaign narratives. This difference can be explained by the diaspora context: the experience of living abroad encourages students to compare Indonesian political narratives with the reality of democracy in their study country, thereby broadening their horizons. In other words, student diasporas are not only information consumers, but also actors who actively build evaluative mechanisms in interpreting political content.

Political awareness and preferences of Indonesian students

Exposure to political information through social media does not always result in an immediate change in political preference. However, such exposure significantly enhances political awareness and strengthens voters' confidence in making more rational and informed decisions. In general, voters better understand the vision, mission, and policy agendas of presidential and vice-presidential candidate pairs (PPWP) in the 2024 election, as social media is utilized as a key instrument for information dissemination. It heightened political awareness is reflected in voters' ability to distinguish between political rhetoric and

substantive policy proposals. Indonesian student voters demonstrate a more critical stance in evaluating campaign promises and express skepticism toward political statements circulating on social media. While political preferences may not shift instantly, the deliberative process resulting from such exposure has reinforced the cognitive and reflective capacities of Indonesian student voters in India, shaping them into politically aware individuals.

Through a complex and dynamic process, exposure to political information on social media does not always lead to an immediate change in political preferences. However, this process significantly contributes to reinforcing or affirming existing preferences. Although some students initially exhibited a predisposition toward a particular presidential and vice-presidential candidate pair (PPWP), exposure to political information accessed through social media strengthened their confidence in that choice. The formation of political preferences among Indonesian students in India during the 2024 presidential election is a reflective process influenced by information exposure and candidate credibility assessments. Social media has played a critical role as a medium for political articulation among Indonesian students in India throughout the 2024 election. These political preferences are not solely based on emotional factors or group identity but also involve rational considerations such as candidates' track records, capabilities, and integrity.

More broadly, this study contributes to developing digital democracy studies in Indonesia. By highlighting the experiences of Indonesian students in India, this study confirms that digital democracy is not only a domestic phenomenon but also a cross-border one. Exposure to political information through social media allows diaspora students to stay connected to political issues in their homeland, while encouraging them to develop a reflective attitude that is not always found among voters in the country. Thus, this study complements the literature on digital democracy and political participation with a diaspora perspective that has been relatively neglected.

The involvement of Indonesian students in India also shows that social media functions as a "transnational democratic space" that connects citizens with domestic politics, even though they are far from their homeland. This finding reinforces the argument that national territorial boundaries can no longer limit political participation but need to be understood within a global framework that includes the role of the diaspora (Adamson, 2016; Anderle, 2021; Bloch, 2025). It opens up opportunities for further research to compare Indonesian diasporas in other countries and examine contextual factors such as education policy, internet access, and local political culture that may influence how diaspora students interpret political information.

From a reflective perspective, this study shows that digital space has become a socio-political arena that enables critical dialogue among student diasporas. Social media is not only a tool for shaping opinions, but also an arena for testing, discussing, and even challenging emerging political narratives. The experiences of Indonesian students in India show that political engagement in the digital age is not merely a matter of exposure to information, but also a matter of the ability to interpret and place that information in a broader context. It makes the student diaspora a rich social laboratory for understanding how digital democracy operates across national borders.

Conclusion

This study confirms that social media played a central role in shaping the political information landscape of Indonesian students in India during the 2024 presidential election. Although exposure to digital information does not always directly result in changes in political preferences, social media has proven to be an important space for strengthening political awareness, improving digital literacy, and fostering critical attitudes towards campaign narratives. Reflection on these findings shows that social media, in the context of transnational digital democracy, is a channel for political communication and a vehicle for political learning that enables diaspora students to develop a more rational and reflective political orientation.

The study results also show that Indonesian students in India place a relatively high level of trust in political information on social media, so digital platforms are seen as the primary medium for accessing, discussing, and evaluating national political dynamics. Although exposure to content does not directly change political choices, students' interaction with digital information has broadened their understanding of electoral issues while strengthening their critical thinking skills regarding political discourse. It confirms the role of social media as a cross-border political deliberation arena that contributes to strengthening democratic awareness among the young diasporas.

However, this study has limitations. The relatively small number of respondents, limitedto Indonesian students in India, means that the results cannot be generalized to the entire diaspora community. In addition, the use of online questionnaires and interviews based on instant messaging applications, although contextually relevant, has limitations in capturing more complex social interaction dynamics. Nevertheless, this study makes an important contribution to the study of digital democracy by emphasizing the importance of strengthening digital literacy in political education, especially for first-time voters and the diaspora, in order to ensure more conscious, reflective, and quality political participation in Indonesia's cross-border democratic process.

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

The institution approved this study.

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