

SOCIAL MEDIA AND DEMOCRACY IN THE DIGITAL ERA: “DESAK ANIES” CAPTURING THE HEARTS OF YOUNG PEOPLE’S PARTICIPATION IN SOCIAL MEDIA

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ABSTRACT. This research aims to analyse the ‘Desak Anies’ political campaign strategy run by Anies Baswedan in the 2024 Indonesian General Election, focusing on the use of social media and direct interaction to increase young voter engagement. This research uses a qualitative method with a case study approach. Data collection was conducted through analysis of mass media sources, literature reviews, and interactions on Twitter social media, which were then processed using Nvivo 12 Plus software. The data analysis technique in this study uses an interactive model technique developed by Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña which consists of three stages, namely data reduction, data presentation and conclusion drawing. This research applies four main theories namely Democracy Theory, Political Communication, Social Media, and Political Participation to examine the impact of the campaign on political participation and public communication. The results show that ‘Desak Anies’ succeeded in creating active participation and open dialogue among young voters, but also revealed the limitations of social media in presenting political issues in depth and the risk of polarising opinions. The article also highlights the challenges of using social media in simplifying complex political issues and the risks of polarising opinions. Through this exploration, this article provides insights into the potential and limitations of social media as a tool for political mobilisation in the digital age.

Keywords: Desak Anies; Campaign Strategy; Social Media; Anies Baswedan.

INTRODUCTION

The development of democracy since the beginning of the 21st century, caused by the digitisation of various aspects of human life, especially in increasing public participation in politics and public decisions (Ayodele et al., 2022). The use of digital media such as social media has a strong positive impact on political participation (Hoffmann & Lutz, 2023) we add to existing research on digital inequalities in online political participation by focusing on privacy concerns as a critical construct. We follow a contextual understanding of online privacy and examine a variety of online political behaviours to differentiate the distinctive roles privacy concerns play in higher- and lower-threshold forms of participation. Based on a survey of German Internet users, we find that social media use exerts a strong positive effect on political participation, especially lower-threshold forms of participation. As privacy concerns are spread quite evenly throughout the population, they contribute little to the socioeconomic stratification of online political participation. Privacy concerns relate positively to higher-threshold forms of political participation. We discuss how higher- and lower-threshold participation constitute distinct contexts for users’ considerations of privacy risks. © The Author(s). Social media is a platform for political communication, political expression, and facilitates digital democracy and acts as a platform for active participation of citizens in the political process and supports the formation

of a broad public forum (Saud et al., 2023). Social media and online platforms have a positive impact on public participation in political discussions (Liçenji, 2023). Increased accessibility and opportunities to communicate with political leaders and more direct political representation through social media have also strengthened interactions between governments and citizens. This can enable more inclusive participation in decision-making that affects society.

Lee et al., (2018) explained that the role of social media in democracy is increasingly significant as the use of these platforms increases around the world. Social media provides a space for users to interact directly with the public and participate in political discussions through comments on social networks, as explained by Fatema et al., (2022). According to Kim & Ellison, (2022), Social media also serves as a medium for social learning in political engagement, allowing political activities that were previously difficult to access to become more visible and understood by other users. Research conducted by Scherman & Rivera, (2021) shows that social media has contributed to shaping people’s political behaviour, despite changes in the environment and patterns of social media consumption over time.

Social media users can share their views, discuss current issues, and even organise political movements more easily (Kuznetsova, 2023). Because people tend to connect with like-minded others and express opinions in response to current events on social media, public opinion on social media is naturally occurring, and time-sensitive (Zhang et al.,

2022). The use of technologies such as social media in public participation enables citizen engagement in political decision-making in a direct and experiential manner (Ozkaramanli et al., 2022).

Social media has become an integral part of people's lives in the digital era, including in Indonesia. The development of information and communication technology, especially social media such as Facebook, Twitter, TikTok and various other platforms, has had a significant impact on the dynamics of democracy (Zinnatullin, 2023). In this context, the role of social media in developing democracy becomes very important (Lee et al., 2018). Various studies and scholarly works have illustrated how social media can facilitate the democratic process, increase public political participation, and strengthen democratic practices in Indonesia.

Elections in Indonesia are an important moment in the practice of democracy, where people have the right to choose their leaders. In recent years, social media has become an important platform for political campaigns and political participation. The use of social media in the 2019 presidential election in Indonesia is a concrete example of how social media has played a significant role in the democratic process. Political campaigns on social media became very important in the 2019 presidential election, where candidates and political parties used social media to convey their vision, mission and programmes to the public. In addition, the public also used social media as a tool to criticise the government and public institutions, and monitor their performance (van der Goot et al., 2024).

However, it is important to remember that the power of social media in democracy also brings challenges. The spread of fake news through social media is a threat to freedom of expression and democracy (Kumar et al., 2023). Online disinformation exerts influence at the individual level as well as public opinion, public discourse, and political decision-making (Rodríguez-Pérez & García-Vargas, 2021). The ease and speed of creating and disseminating information through social media has opened up a wide space for the spread of hoaxes that are growing rapidly (Seböck et al., 2023). Thus, the role of social media in democracy is as a tool that encourages active participation, provides wider access to political information, but also presents challenges in managing the veracity of information and preventing the manipulation of public opinion.

In this paper, we will examine the role of social media in developing democracy in Indonesia. One of the interesting things in the discussion is the emergence of a campaign event called "Desak Anies"

in the 2024 elections. In this article, the author will analyse the phenomenon that appears on social media towards political activities in the implementation of the 2024 general election through in-depth analysis.

METODE

This research uses a qualitative method with a case study approach. Data collection techniques in this research used documentation techniques with data sources from mass media and previous research relevant to the research theme. This research also uses twitter social media as additional data taken using the keyword "Desak Anies". In this research, analysis tools on Nvivo 12 Plus are used to see the relationship between the Desak Anies Issue and relevant theories and then analysed in depth. In this article, 4 theories are used, namely Democracy Theory, Political Communication Theory, Social Media Theory and Political Participation Theory in analysing the issue of Anies Baswedan's campaign style called "Desak Anies".

Miles, Huberman and Saldaña developed an interactive data analysis model involving three main stages: data reduction, data presentation and conclusion drawing. In the data reduction stage, raw data is simplified and selected to filter out relevant information according to the research objectives. The data presentation stage was conducted by organising the reduced data into a structured format to facilitate the analysis of patterns or relationships between variables. The final stage, conclusion drawing, formulates the final results and interpretation of the findings that contribute to a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study. This analytical approach supports a systematic and focused research process, where each stage is interrelated to produce valid and meaningful conclusions.



Source: Author, 2023

Figure 1. Data Processing through Nvivo12 Plus

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The implementation of the 2024 elections has experienced many developments compared to 2019, especially the use of social media in political campaigns by presidential and vice presidential candidates and legislative candidates. The use of social media has attracted a lot of attention from the public because of the unique ways politicians use to

get attention to be elected at the time of the election. A campaign that has caught the attention of social media users in recent times is an event called “Desak Anies”.

“Desak Anies” is a dialogical campaign event held by Anies Baswedan, the number 1 presidential candidate in the 2024 presidential election in Indonesia. The event aims to open a space for the younger generation to voice their interests and absorb the aspirations of young voters. “Desak Anies” has been held in several cities in Indonesia, such as Medan, Bandung, and Banjarmasin, which were attended by young voters, such as high school students and university students. Participants who attended were given the opportunity to ask questions about various themes or deepen the vision and mission and could voice their interests to the future leaders. This form of political campaign attracts the attention of the public, especially young voters, and becomes a forum to strengthen political participation in Indonesia.

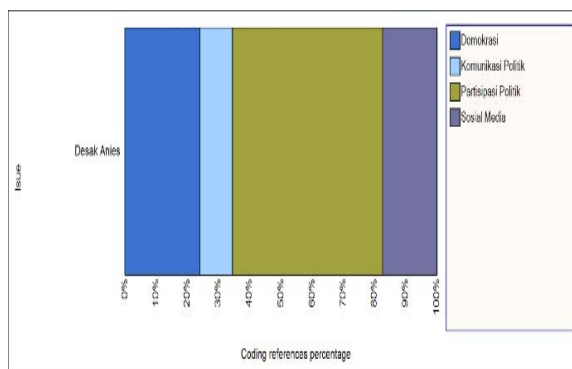
The implementation of the campaign with the design “Desak Anies” was carried out in a way that the presidential candidate Anies Baswedan sat facing each other with questioners at one table and could ask anything about Anies Baswedan. The event became easily viral on social media because the campaign was attended by young people. Participants who attended the event recorded the activities carried out and uploaded them on their social media. This makes a campaign that is held in one place, can be seen by many people in other places. As done by the tiktok account @ekaputra3458 who uploaded a video snippet of the implementation of the “Desak Anies” event on Tiktok and was watched up to 709,300 times. (Table 1)

Based on Table 1 and Figure 2, it can be seen that the topic of Anies’ Desak on social media is associated with 4 theoretical approaches, namely: Democracy, Political Communication, Political Participation and Social Media. In the theoretical approach Political Participation has the largest portion with a score of 48.28%. In Democracy theory on the issue of Desak Anies on social media has a score of 24.14%, for Social Media theory has a score of 17.24% while the political communication theory approach has the lowest portion with a score of 10.34%.

Table 1. The topic Desak Anies on Social Media

Keyword	Democracy	Political Communication	Political Participation	Sosial Media
Desak Anies	24,14%	10,34%	48,28%	17,24%

Source: Proccesed by researchers using Nvivo 12 plus software



Source: Proccesed by researchers using Nvivo 12 plus software

Figure 2. Social Media Theme Analysis

This shows that the topic of “Desak Anies” on social media has a significant relationship with aspects in the realm of politics and public communication. The dominance of scores on the Political Participation theory approach suggests that the issue has a close relationship with ongoing political dynamics, possibly related to Anies Baswedan’s policies, responses, or political role in the context. While the low score on the Political Communication theoretical approach could indicate that there is a lack of information delivery or communication strategies related to the topic on social media. A lower score on the Social Media theory approach may indicate that the influence and exposure of this issue has not been fully maximised on social media platforms. Thus, this analysis highlights the complexity of how political issues such as the topic of “Desak Anies” relate to various aspects such as politics, communication, and social media exposure in the public sphere.

1. Democracy Perspective Analysis.

Democratic theory emphasises that the political system and the electoral process play an important role in enabling people to select representative leaders through fair and accountable political participation. Elections not only serve as a leader selection mechanism, but also play a role in strengthening government legitimacy and building public trust in political institutions, as explained in the concept of a linkage mechanism that connects citizens to the political system through a fair and participatory process (Hooghe & Stiers, 2016). In addition, elections enable the formation of a collective agenda and provide a space for citizens to monitor and supervise public officials, thereby increasing government accountability (Warren,

2017). In this context, elections are not just an activity to elect officials, but also an important instrument in the democratisation process by integrating the values of participation and political deliberation in a sustainable manner (Vallier, 2021).

“Desak Anies” can be linked to democratic theory which emphasises the importance of public participation in the political process. In line with the research (Djuyandi & Darmawan, 2023) that people at the local level really understand the importance of political participation. In this context, the event gave young voters the opportunity to interact directly with potential leaders, cast their votes, and voice their interests. This reflects the spirit of democracy, which promotes more active participation by citizens. Participation is inherently political, but it cannot be ignored as a powerful tool for democracy (Maravilla & Grayman, 2020). The quality of modern democracy lies in the active participation of citizens in the political decision-making process (Aurylaite, 2017). The concept of democracy also emphasises dialogue and the exchange of ideas as important aspects of inclusive decision-making.

“Desak Anies” facilitates direct dialogue between Anies Baswedan and the public, enabling the exchange of ideas and aspirations. This reflects the idea of democracy, which prioritises multiple voices and opinions as the basis for political decision-making. The shift in public opinion increasingly favours technology-assisted public decision-making (Suter et al., 2022). Democratic theory emphasises the importance of openness and transparency in the political process. “Desak Anies”, by allowing the public to ask questions directly to the candidates, creates a sense of openness in answering the questions raised. This indicates an attempt to increase transparency and give citizens greater access to a candidate’s political agenda and vision.

Democratic theory recognises the importance of building people’s capacity, including a better understanding of politics. “Desak Anies” provides an opportunity for young voters to be actively involved in political discussions, which in turn can improve their understanding of the political process and the decisions they make as citizens. “Desak Anies” can be correlated with democratic theory as it encourages active participation, open dialogue, exchange of ideas, and increased political understanding among the public, especially young voters. This is in accordance with democratic principles that emphasise community involvement in a political decision-making process (Kekkonen & Belitskaya, 2023).

2. Political Communication Perspective Analysis.

Political Communication Theory explains how social media and communication can be used to convey information and reach voters. (Haman, 2023) and the majority of publications on the region focus on single case studies. Previous studies have primarily concentrated on presidents, or in the case of MPs, on specific case studies. A total of 2,353,138 tweets were accessed via the Twitter API, and 3,215 MPs were examined. Regression models and correlations were used to answer research questions, and the main variables examined concerned individual characteristics of MPs (gender and age. “Desak Anies” brings more direct communication between Anies Baswedan as a leadership candidate and individuals, especially young voters. This approach allowed direct interaction where event participants could dialogue and ask questions directly to Anies. This reflects the importance of interpersonal communication in the political campaign process to create personal relationships with potential voters (Koylu, 2019).

“Desak Anies” was seen to utilise social media actively. The active participation of youth in recording moments of the event and sharing them on social media platforms shows the power of using such media in spreading political messages. With the increasing role of social networks, politicians and political organisations are adopting the use of social media to communicate with internet users in the changing context of political communication (Farkas & Schwartz, 2018). This is consistent with political communication theory regarding the influence of mass media in expanding the reach of messages and shaping public perceptions (Yaakub et al., 2023). The virality of the event participants’ posts, as seen in the example of TikTok posts with significant viewership, shows how “Desak Anies” succeeded in creating engaging content that spread quickly among social media users. This illustrates the political communication theory of how compelling messages and viral content can have a major impact in shaping public perception. The use of social media by event participants to relay live moments of the event also reflects political communication theory regarding the role of active participation in the communication process. Participants are not only spectators, but also producers of political content and messages that are then widely disseminated.

Recent studies emphasise that social media such as TikTok and Instagram have become important tools for politicians to reach young voters more effectively. For example, in the 2022 French election, political parties successfully mobilised young voters

through visual communication strategies and content tailored to the Instagram platform (Fourcade, 2022). Campaigns such as ‘Desak Anies’ reflect a similar approach, where visualisation of political content and interactive narratives create higher engagement from young audiences. This phenomenon underscores the importance of political communication strategies tailored to the platforms and consumption styles of young voters, who are increasingly shifting from conventional media towards visual-based social media.

In addition, other studies have shown that direct engagement of young voters through social media plays an important role in broadening political participation and creating an emotional connection between candidates and audiences. A study of the 2023 Albanian local elections found that voter engagement on social media had a significant effect on the election results, particularly through increased participation and public discussion on platforms such as Facebook and Instagram (Liçenji, 2023b). The ‘Urge Anies’ campaign also capitalised on this trend by enabling young voters to become not only consumers, but also producers of political content through social media posts. This finding reinforces the relevance of political communication theory, which emphasises that active audience participation through social media can amplify political messages and influence public perception at large.

3. Social Media Perspective Analysis.

An analysis of Indonesian youth political participation through social media shows that digital platforms play a key role in strengthening democracy in the digital age. The study shows that youth participation in political discussions through social media, such as in the #ReformasiDikorupsi movement, creates a virtual public space that facilitates political expression and allows youth to develop their political identity and contribute to the democratic process (Wahyuningroem et al., 2022). Other research confirms that the use of social media by young people creates great opportunities for engagement in participatory democracy, especially in countries facing democratic challenges such as Indonesia (Loader & Mercea, 2012). In a broader context, this digital engagement helps to increase political awareness and participation, shape public opinion, and mobilise collective action that strengthens the country’s democratic political structures (Saud & Margono, 2021).

Social media as a means of communication has the role of bringing its users to actively participate by contributing and giving feedback openly, both to

share information and respond online in a fast time (Budiyo, 2016). “Desak Anies” illustrates how the active youth presence at the event generated content that was then uploaded and disseminated on social media platforms. This reflects social media theory, which emphasises the potential wide reach and viral effect of engaging content. The content from the event, such as the TikTok posts that were viewed by hundreds of thousands of people, shows how direct interaction with potential voters can have a huge impact in spreading political messages through social-media platforms. In the research Farkas & Schwartz, (2018) emphasised that social media such as Facebook are important tools for one-way political communication and public opinion monitoring.

Social media theory highlights the importance of engaging content to drive user engagement (Williams et al., 2012). Through “Desak Anies”, the direct interaction between Anies Baswedan and young voters creates interesting and relevant content for the audience, which is then shared widely on social media platforms. This creates a strong incentive for the active involvement of young voters in the political process (Williams et al., 2012). Social media theory emphasises the role of social media in shaping public opinion (Sai et al., 2023; Taylor et al., 2023). “Desak Anies” with its strategy of utilising social media to expand the reach of political campaigns, created an opportunity for potential voters to gain first-hand insight into the candidate and his political vision. The content uploaded by event participants indirectly plays a role in shaping public discussion and opinion regarding the candidate. Social media theory underlines the active participation of users in generating and disseminating content (Magdaci et al., 2022; Tapsell, 2023).

“Desak Anies” reflects the important role of youth in producing content related to the event. Event participants became content producers who then extended the reach of political messages through their interactions on social media platforms (Goodwin et al., 2023). Overall, “Desak Anies” shows how social media theory is applied in the context of political campaigns. The utilisation of social media to create engaging content, expand the reach of political messages, and encourage active engagement from users plays an important role in the success and impact of the campaign on social media platforms.

Although interaction through social media allows for easier and quicker access, it does not necessarily create a deep understanding of political issues. Discussions limited to short formats on social media may not cover the more complex aspects of political visions or solutions to complex problems.

When content is produced by participants of events such as “Desak Anies”, there is the potential that the content shared may be selected or edited in a way that only highlights the favourable side of the event. This can create an imbalance in the actual representation of the event and give a less objective impression of the campaign event. The use of social media can amplify polarisation of opinion. Content shared on social media often reaches audiences that share similar political leanings or views. This can lead to an ‘echo chamber’ where dissenting opinions are rarely heard or considered, reducing the opportunity for healthy and constructive dialogue.

On social media platforms, especially with short formats like TikTok, the information presented tends to be short and easy to absorb. However, this can also be a limitation in presenting complex issues with all their aspects. A short, limited discussion may not cover all the nuances or important details of a topic. When users become content producers, the validity and reliability of the content is also a concern. Uploaded content may lack verification or have a tendency to present information that is not entirely accurate, especially if it deals with political claims or complex data. The use of social media can also be vulnerable to manipulation or external influence from parties with vested interests. Be it through the dissemination of false information, smear campaigns, or attempts to manipulate public opinion through invalid or fabricated content.

4. Political Participation Perspective Analysis.

From the perspective of political participation, the ‘Desak Anies’ campaign reflects the transformation of modern politics, where participation does not only occur conventionally through elections, but also through direct interaction and digital contributions. This concept of digital political participation is increasingly important along with the increasing role of social media in expanding public engagement in the political process. Recent studies show that youth tend to be more actively involved in political discussions through platforms such as TikTok and Instagram, due to the ease of access and interactive engagement that these media provide (Fourcade, 2022). In the context of ‘Desak Anies,’ youth are not only recipients of information, but also participate in spreading political messages through uploading content that can attract the attention of a wide audience.

Furthermore, the campaign showed that political participation is no longer limited to formal activities such as voting but also includes active

participation in digital discussions and activities. Findings from research on the 2023 Albanian elections confirm that social media plays a key role in increasing political engagement, especially among younger voters who are more digitally connected (Liçenji, 2023b). The ‘Urge Anies’ campaign demonstrates how online activities such as political discussions and sharing event experiences can strengthen political engagement, thereby expanding citizen participation beyond the physical boundaries of traditional political activities.

By introducing a direct dialogue format under the “Desak Anies” initiative, Anies Baswedan has shown a strong response to the increasingly pressing demands for transparency and participation, especially from the younger generation who are strongly connected to technology and social media. This initiative reflects Anies’ commitment to building more open communication channels and inviting participation from various levels of society, creating a platform that allows for a more effective exchange of ideas and aspirations in addressing important issues at hand. In the analysis of political participation theory, this reflects the adaptation of political strategies to meet the demands and developments in public perception towards more direct and engaged political participation. Political participation today has a relationship in the use of social media that has an impact on political development (Onyechi, 2018). “Desak Anies” embodies an effort to bring political leaders closer and more open to potential voters, with the hope of strengthening people’s engagement and trust in the political process.

Kampanye “Desak Anies” menegaskan bahwa perpaduan antara partisipasi langsung dan digital menjadi model baru dalam politik kontemporer, terutama dalam menjangkau pemilih muda. Kampanye ini memanfaatkan media sosial dan interaksi tatap muka untuk menciptakan keterlibatan politik yang lebih kuat dan personal, memungkinkan pemilih muda menjadi produsen sekaligus konsumen pesan politik. Hal ini mendukung konsep bahwa keterlibatan politik digital mampu memperkuat demokrasi partisipatif, seperti terlihat dalam studi yang menekankan bagaimana media digital memberikan ruang bagi pemuda untuk lebih aktif dalam kampanye politik dan proses demokrasi (Kahne & Bowyer, 2019). Dengan demikian, “Desak Anies” menjadi contoh konkret bagaimana partisipasi politik dapat berkembang melalui pemanfaatan media sosial untuk menciptakan hubungan emosional dan mendorong keterlibatan aktif dalam politik, yang pada akhirnya memperkuat legitimasi politik dan memperluas partisipasi publik.

CONCLUSION

This research shows that the ‘Desak Anies’ campaign successfully utilised digital technology and direct interaction to attract young voters’ engagement in politics. Through social media, the campaign extended the reach of political communication and built more personal connections with voters, underlining the potential of social media as an effective mobilisation tool. However, the use of social media in campaigns also brings challenges, such as the risk of oversimplifying complex political issues and the potential for polarisation of opinions in online public spaces, especially due to the short-form nature of the content. This emphasises that while social media accelerates access to information, a critical approach is needed to ensure balanced and accurate representation.

This research highlights the importance of a balance between digital communication and direct interaction in political campaign strategies. The combination of direct dialogue with an authentic digital approach has the potential to not only increase political participation, but also strengthen democratic principles by engaging voters in a more open and in-depth political process. This research provides insights that social media, as a link between leaders and voters, requires an approach that pays attention to the depth of issues and accuracy of information to reduce the risk of polarisation and build more solid public trust in politics.

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