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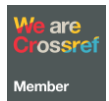
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Why are the younger generation anti-political?: critical discourse analysis on political education for beginners

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ABSTRACT

There are numerous ways for the younger generation to participate in politics, but there are evidence that they are unwilling to join (anti-politics). This research is necessary to understand the reasons why they are uninterested in politics, so that ways to boost their political participation can be presented based on grassroot understanding. This study tries to expose two things: (1) the causes of this trend, and (2) remedies to support smooth political circulation in Indonesia as a democratic country. This qualitative-type study accomplishes those purpose by employing Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Object of this study is the perception of political participation among the younger generation. Data acquired through netnography to the controversial documentary *Sexy Killer's* on YouTube. This study highlights several significant findings, particularly the ambivalence and conflict between reality and ideals in today's youth and society. They are skeptical of the earnestness and dedication of government leaders elected through a democratic political process. At the same time, people expect government personnel to carry out their responsibilities. The implications of this study's findings are a criticism of the political education model, which has so far prioritized practical factors above theoretical aspects (content, composition, and proportion).

Keywords:

Anti-political
Political education for beginner
Political participation

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Introduction

The younger generation has the potential to become a country's political force because they are numerous, energetic, and agile in rational thinking (Green, 2017; Stoker, 2014; Zachara, 2020). However, there are tendentious symptoms that they are less interested in participating in politics. The results of a journalistic investigation conducted by Wahyu and published on (Kompas.com, 2023) reveal this trend in 2023 in detail. He explained that the younger generation is at the crossroads between participating in political change, or being apathetic towards political input-process-output.

Kompas.com (2023) cites the results of a poll in August 2022, which concluded that 5 out of 10 young respondents rarely follow political news. The results of the poll also concluded that many of the young respondents had never even followed political news and government or state issues. Only 25% of respondents follow national and local political issues. According to Juelich (2022), the younger generation tends not to be interested in direct politics. They are more interested in politics remotely. This trend has also been discussed by Ekström & Shehata (2018) and Keating & Melis (2017), today's young generation has a tendency to participate in politics through digital platforms (namely social

media). In Harsono's research (2023), it was even found that there was a tendency for identity politics and hate speech when political participation was carried out through social media.

However, the results of the Kompas.com poll correct and disconfirm these findings. In Indonesia, 4 out of 10 young respondents admit that they rarely discuss and debate politics through social media. Some of the rest even admit that they never did. Only 21.7% of respondents said they often discussed political issues through social media. Even then, when referring to [Harsono's \(2023\)](#) findings, the ongoing political discussion is not necessarily a healthy discussion.

The younger generation's lack of interest in political participation is not unique to Indonesia. According to [White et al. \(2000\)](#), the younger generation (aged 14-24 years) in England, Wales, and Scotland are also uninterested in their country's politics. In the United Kingdom, this tendency began in 2001-2005 ([Sloam, 2007](#)) and persisted until 2011 ([Pontes et al., 2019](#)). It is probable that this pattern continues now, as it is in Indonesia. As citizens who have full political rights, according to [Teorell et al. \(2007\)](#), they can participate in politics in several ways. Participation can be voluntary or transactional, such as voting in elections, sending letters/messages to the government, participating in protests/demonstrations, becoming members of political parties or social organizations, running for public office, making donations to parties or politicians, to fundraising.

According to data from [BPS \(2022\)](#), more than 35% of Indonesia's population is aged 15-35 years. Meanwhile, according to some of the studies above, they tend to be apolitical. This phenomenon has been caught by several parties, which are then followed up with political education. Political education is usually carried out by the General Election Commission ([Soleha et al., 2022](#)), political parties ([Suryani & Suryanef, 2022](#)), and local governments ([Suparno et al., 2020](#)). The educational methods are also very diverse, such as outreach, FGDs, as well as with the Election Smart House ([Hariyanti & Sari, 2021](#); [Rafni & Suryanef, 2019](#)). Even so, according to the findings of [Al-Hamdi & Sofyan \(2023\)](#) these efforts actually did not have a significant impact, especially for the younger generation over 25 years of age.

The discussion of the problems above shows that the relationship between young people and contemporary politics is very complex and often problematic. They are often denounced as the apolitical harbingers of the nascent 'crisis of democracy', while concurrently heralded as creators of new, sophisticated forms of politics, especially in the electronic world ([Farthing, 2010](#)). This problem is the focus of this study. This study seeks to uncover the causes of the emergence of these problem attitudes, and formulate alternative solutions. This urgency needs attention, because as emphasized by a political scientist, Budiardjo (1998), the level of political participation is the main indicator of the development of democracy and the smooth circulation of government in a country.

Problem statement and resesarch question

The social practices identified above lead to a problem: the younger generation who live and interact politically in a democratic manner actually has low political participation. This situation, according to Fairclough, is a social disorder that illustrates the injustice of policy-making by senior political actors towards society, causing a practical political image to become dirty, fraudulent, and full of hypocrisy. This study then describes the problem in more detail into the following three research questions to answer: (1) why do social irregularities appear in the younger generation? (2) do social wrongs are demanded by the community?, and (3) what are the alternative solutions to the problem of this social wrong?

Previous studies and novelty

This study is not the only study that discusses the low interest of the younger generation in practical politics. Previously, there were three leading studies that discussed anti-political attitudes and apathy towards politics in the younger generation. The three studies were conducted by [Farthing \(2010\)](#), [Henn et al. \(2002\)](#), and [Zhang \(2022\)](#). [Farthing's research \(2010\)](#) compares two paradigms which view the younger generation as active and passive political participants. He then synthesizes a new paradigm that can more clearly explain the model of political participation of the younger generation.

This paradigm can even explain the reason for the apolitical attitude that exists in the younger generation.

Almost the same as Farthing, [Zhang \(2022\)](#) in his research in Singapore also uses the concept of comparison to explain the low interest of the younger generation in politics. However, he uses a temporal comparison, namely the situation of reluctance to participate in politics in 2011 and 2020. According to [Zhang's findings \(2022\)](#) the disinterest of the younger generation in dominant politics is caused by the absence of political interest in the younger generation. This means that, psychologically, the younger generation now has a higher priority in non-political fields (eg business).

Last, the quantitative research by [Henn et al. \(2002\)](#), which reveals that actually the younger generation is still participating in politics, but as voters, not as another role. [Henn et al. \(2002\)](#) further elaborated on their findings by stating that participation was only a formality. That is, even though the younger generation participates as voters, they do not trust the performance of the people they elect in the election. The three studies above have alluded to several reasons behind the young generation's reluctance to participate in political activities. However, none of the studies above discussed the disinterest in using the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) method. This research also has other weaknesses, namely it does not confirm whether the community wants this situation or not, and does not formulate alternative solutions to the problem of low political participation.

As a follow-up to the limitations of previous studies, this study favors novelty in the form of findings and discussion of: the reasons for the apolitical attitude of the younger generation in more detail using the CDA method, the will of the community for this attitude, and formulating alternative solutions to the apolitical attitude of the younger generation. The findings of this study contribute to a new discourse on political education for beginners. As an implication, the findings of this study can become a reference for political party regeneration centers, KPU, Bawaslu, and formal educational institutions.

Method

This study was carried out in the CDA design proposed by [Fairclough \(2013\)](#). CDA was chosen because the social problems and situations identified in this study meet the basic assumptions of CDA, namely the existence of social irregularities, and these social irregularities are expressed through language that represents the ideology behind them. CDA systematic steps are presented in Table 1.

Tabel 1. Systematic stages of Fairclough's CDA

Stage	Description
1	Semiotic identification of social irregularities in society.
2	Find the obstacles that cause social wrong.
3	Analyzing the dialectical relationship between text and social practice.
4	Determine whether social irregularities are wanted by society or not.
4	Formulate possible alternative solutions to overcome social irregularities.

This study obtains data on social disorder through netnography in the controversial documentary *Sexy Killer* ([youtube.com/watch?v=qIB7vg4I-To](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qIB7vg4I-To)). The documentary was chosen as the subject of the study because it was considered to contain the most negative sentiments towards political actors. At earlier of methodological stage, we identify the meaning that is created and communicated through the sign of language ([Cummings et al., 2020](#)). The findings will be useful in understanding the dialectical relationship between texts and social activities.

In terms of the momentum of its publication, the documentary also meets actuality requirements, namely being published four days before the Indonesian presidential election in April 2019. In 5 days, the documentary has been watched more than 14 million times, and thousands of netizens commented on it. In turn, the documentary became controversial because it was seen as promoting the non-voting movement (white group, golput). This polemic can be read in the comments of netizens in the comments column of the documentary. Therefore, the data in this study were obtained by searching the comments column. The comments column is considered as a source of data because it contains sentences as semiotic and ideological expressions on the theme being commented on. The sentences in the comments column are then analyzed in stages 2, 3, and 4.

Following [Cummings' \(2020\)](#) guidelines, this research did three things in stage 2: (a) select texts relevant to the object of research, (b) analyze the texts at the level of individual words or phrases, determining how the words and phrases relate to one another in the text, and (c) identify discourses in the text based on the prior discourses identified in stage 1. In stage three, we describe how the text was formed and how this may or may not be related to the discourses detected in the text. The text has been analyzed, as have the recognized discourses. Finally, we developed potential remedies or alternatives to the prevailing discourse in the form of new discourses, narratives, and arguments.

Results and Discussion

The findings of this study succeeded in uncovering social irregularities and alternative solutions. Through semiotic search and analysis, which is then further analyzed following the steps of the CDA, this study succeeded in revealing the existence of suspicion, pessimism, and validation of the arrogance and egoism of political actors. Some of the comments for the documentary even denotatively describe the reluctance of the younger generation to simply read/listen to information about government activities. The findings of this study confirm some of the findings of other studies, but also disconfirm the findings of other studies. One of the findings of other researchers confirmed in this study is that of [\(Robin et al., 2022\)](#), which reveals that the younger generation sees a negative image in Indonesian political activities because they are always synonymous with corruption. The findings of [Robin et al. \(2022\)](#) another thing that was confirmed in this study is the need for political education that is proportional and right on target (not driven by the political interests of a particular party).

Even so, one of the most highlighted findings in this study is a misunderstanding about political participation. Many of the young people think that the form of political participation is to become a voter or an elected actor. In fact, according to [Teorell et al. \(2007\)](#) and [van Deth \(2016\)](#), they can participate in politics as voters, critics, actors/officials, and independents (community organizations, philanthropies, professional organizations, and so on). This study ultimately agrees with [Tessler's statement \(2007\)](#), that the younger generation is the great hope for the continuity of the political and government process. They, however, can also be a serious challenge if they are reluctant and stay away from political activity. In more detail, this study discusses these findings thematically into three categories according to the research questions.

Misunderstanding about politics, power, and government

This study detects misconceptions about politics, power, and government. In one of the comments analyzed in this study, there are various statements such as: "oh, yes that's true, the government has the authority to be as free as possible to do what it wants. That's why I stay away from politics-government". This statement illustrates that the younger generation understands government as a unit that is superpower, cannot be contested, and has unlimited or unchallenged power. Such a misunderstanding has been discussed by [Miftakhuddin et al. \(2019\)](#). The younger generation they studied understand politics as an effort to support and strengthen democracy and the principle of freedom. This study confirms their findings based on comments by netizens who see politics as a source of strength to behave as freely as possible.

Basically, power, politics and governance need to be understood carefully by referring to key sources, such as [Al-Hudaibi \(1997\)](#) or [Flathman \(2020\)](#). Power is authority or right. Politics is the use of power to make decisions collectively. In short, politics is usually defined as the relationship between the owner of power and the object being controlled. The state is a political organization/unit. In it, there is a government to maintain the monopoly on the legitimate use of power and for the welfare of society. Meanwhile, governance is the activity of regulating society in a legislative, executive, and judicial manner. This study places misunderstandings about politics, power, and government as obstacles that cause social irregularities (apathy and apolitical attitudes in the younger generation). The expressions above illustrate that the younger generation is resistant to political issues (especially political activities). However, as emphasized by [Dremel & Matić \(2014\)](#), they do not realize that all this time they have been under the hegemony of the government or political actors.

That is, there is a subtle dialectical relationship between the younger generation and government hegemony. Many government policies make the younger generation feel embarrassed, afraid, and pessimistic. These policies ultimately make the younger generation become apathetic and apolitical. Even so, actually the policy was intentional not only to fulfill the party's interests or the government's personal interests, but also to regulate the way of thinking of the younger generation (in a hegemonic way). Subtle dialectical relationships like this are latent ([Putnam, 2015](#)), so the younger generation is not aware of them. Therefore, ideological hegemony proceeds very smoothly to the object that is dominated ([Jahedi et al., 2015](#)).

Public preference for anti-political attitudes of the younger generation

If we ask the question: is apathy and apolitical attitude in the younger generation desired by society?, then the answer is yes, but at the same time no. This is because people's responses tend to be ambivalent. This means that people don't want the younger generation to let go of what's happening in Indonesia. But at the same time, people also agree that whoever will replace the current government must solve the problems left by the current government.



Figure 1. An Expression of Pessimism and Hope

Semiotically, as can be seen in Fig. 1, there are a number of perceptions and ideologies behind these comments. These comments contain very clear denotative and connotative meanings, namely that the Indonesian government as the possessor of political power has indeed been so amoral and so unreliable. In addition, there is also a meaning that [Barthes \(1972\)](#) calls myth. The myth that can be seen in the comments is that the government's ugliness and indifference to society is common, although it is not ideal. Further interpretation of this myth boils down to the conclusion that general elections to determine political figures occupying government are completely useless. This means that whoever is elected, regardless of the promises made and where the political figures come from, in the end they will not be able to fulfill the people's expectations.

Myths that have been believed to be a reality (no longer an ideality) are very difficult to deconstruct. If the political process that takes place then results in a policy or order that does not meet people's expectations, then the myth will repeat itself. [Womack & Davis \(2006\)](#) call this repetition re-mythology. Meanwhile, demythology can only take place when the results of the

political process meet the expectations of the majority of society. Myths that cannot be deconstructed are also described in a straightforward and sarcastic manner in other comments (Fig. 2 and Fig. 3).

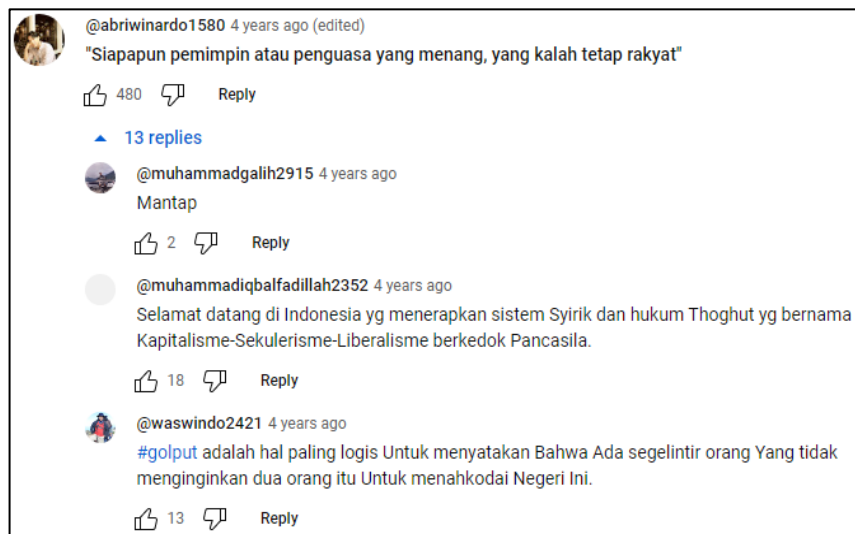


Figure 2. Ekspresi Apatis dan Apolitis



Figure 3. An Expression of Pessimism and Validation of Government Egoism

There is equality between leaders and rulers in Fig. 2 does not illustrate a misunderstanding of the difference between a leader and a ruler. Semiotically, it actually indicates a strong sentiment towards contemporary political decision makers. Generally, the starting point for the emergence of these sentiments is empirical experience. At the most extreme point, this sentiment has not only developed into an apathetic and apolitical attitude, but has culminated in an anti-establishment attitude (Droste, 2021). That is, the community may build "counter-financial" to counter the government's influence in society.

These symptoms have already begun to appear in the examples presented in Fig. 3. The ideology captured in the expressions of netizens in Fig. 3 explains that today the decision not to become a voter is no longer relevant. According to (Green, 2017), this situation is part of the youth crisis caused by

inequality between generations. In the current situation, the younger generation finally has the belief, as stated by [Heywood \(2015\)](#), that politics has become an arena for a struggle of interests full of the tricks of the actors behind it.

Alternative educational models: Andragogy and heutagogy

Political life must involve the younger generation, but the findings of an OECD study (2020) which concludes that current politics is not suitable for the younger generation also need attention. The findings of the OECD study are an indication of the need for reform of the political paradigm, and a paradigm in political education that can improve political image. So far, many alternatives to political education have been directed at building interest in participating in politics as voters. An example is political education discussed by [Anjani \(2021\)](#) and [Achir & Rahim \(2023\)](#). Such political education is not much different from the political education organized by the political parties, KPU and Bawaslu mentioned at the beginning of this paper. The implication is that political education only teaches practical politics, not essential politics. Yet according to [Jarvis, 1994](#), education for the younger generation and adults should touch on essential politics.

The notion of practical politics is indeed not as shallow as being a voter in general elections, but rather developing an attitude of respect for differences in opinions, perspectives, and the rights and obligations of each citizen. Thus, individuals can understand that everyone is equal ([Wade, 2007](#)). But in essential politics, people will be taught to be good and democratic citizens. With such a target, political education should provide access to individuals to regulate how they learn. Thus, the pedagogical approach is not very suitable for the implementation of political education. Therefore, political education needs to be carried out using andragogical approaches (for voters or beginners) and heutagogy (for people who have been active in politics for a long time). If aligned with human age (children, adolescents, and adults), andragogy and heutagogy approaches are approaches intended for adolescents and adults ([Blaschke, 2012](#)). The most striking differences are briefly presented in Table 2.

Tabel 2. Comparison of andragogy and heutagogy approaches

Aspect	Andragogy	Heutagogy
Characteristic	Self-directed	Self-determined
Objective	Competency development	Capability development
Design	Linear design and learning approach	Non-linear design and learning approach
Instructor role	Instructor-learner directed	Learner –directed
Outcomes	Getting Student to learn (content)	Getting student to understand how they learn (process)

The andragogical approach is only appropriate when the maturity and independence of students is assessed as lacking, so that it requires educator control and a more mature and strict learning curriculum structure. The heutagogic approach will only be appropriate to choose when students are judged to have sufficient maturity and independence. If students meet these criteria, then educator control and the structure of the learning curriculum do not need to be formulated in a standard way ([Canning, 2010](#)).

However, it is necessary to understand that the maturity referred to in [Canning's \(2010\)](#) classification does not always refer to age, but to ways of thinking, emotional control, social skills, and problem solving abilities. The same is true with independent learning. This means that the decision to choose an approach must be based on the results of a diagnostic assessment ([Ketterlin-Geller et al., 2019](#)). The results of the diagnostic assessment are able to provide detailed and scientific information about how mature and how independent prospective students are in learning. Thus, the outcome in political education is not only concerned with being a good voter, but also in becoming a good and democratic citizen.

Conclusion

Apathy and apolitical attitudes as social wrongs which are the main issues of this study are dominantly caused by the pessimistic attitude and disappointment of the younger generation towards figures who currently have political power in government. Based on their experience, the change of government did not have a significant impact. They in turn "understand" the government's actions. This was also confirmed by the public, who were more clearly ambivalent. They agree with the statement of the younger generation who are apathetic and apolitical because the government which has political power is very disappointing. But on the other hand, they also put their hope that there will be a new government that can meet the public's expectations. This new government, is none other than the younger generation who are currently being apathetic and apolitical. This study underpinned that the younger generation is the great hope for the continuity of the political and government process. However, they can also be a serious challenge if they are reluctant and stay away from political activity. For this reason, this study recommends andragogy and heutagogy approaches in political education.

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