

**Identifying First-Time Voter Preferences: A
Conjoint Experiment Among High School Students In
East Jakarta Indonesia**

A Thesis

**Submitted to the Master's Study Program of Political Science at the Faculty of
Social Sciences in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of**

Master of Arts (M.A.)



By:

Ja'far Muhammad

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UNIVERSITAS ISLAM INTERNASIONAL INDONESIA

DEPOK

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ABSTRACT

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What attributes do first-time voters prefer in a legislative candidate? This study aims to demonstrate the characteristics first-time voters prefer from a legislative candidate. Through a conjoint experiment that allows researchers to identify and nonparametrically estimate the causal effects of many components simultaneously, this study found show that first-time voters' preferences. Factors that are significant in influencing the predicted results are educational attainment, political party identity, residency, experience, age, and blusukan (impromptu visits). In contrast, this study's findings did not find any correlation between a candidate's success and their campaign strategy in terms of the number of billboards they used, how often they appeared on social media, or their interactions on social media. The results of this study do, however, reflect on how first-time voters consider the many attributes of a candidate and make their decisions when casting their ballots.

Keywords: *First-time Voters, Conjoint Experiment, Election.*

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"For the sake of God, society, and the advancement of knowledge."

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Puzzle

Studies on first-time voters have highlighted various aspects that affect young people's political participation. Most of these studies emphasize the low turnout of first-time voters and efforts to increase this turnout. Factors identified include the high cost of political participation, feelings of marginalization, and weak links between young people and political parties. On the other hand, other studies have focused on strategies to increase youth participation, such as volunteering, social media, and political education. However, analyses of the behavior of first-time voters and the attributes that influence their political preferences have not received sufficient attention. In-depth research into specific attributes such as gender, age, position and previous experience, which may influence the political choices of first-time voters, is limited. In addition, not many studies have used first-time voters as their main research subject. Therefore, studies on the behavior of first-time voters are becoming increasingly important in understanding the factors that influence their choices, including the use of alternative media, parental influence, and the role of social media in political campaigns.

Some research on first-time voters revolves around the study of low voter turnout (Cherry, 2012), including problems with voter turnout due to high costs (Schafer, 2020), declining voter turnout due to feelings of marginalization (Keaney, 2006) and disengagement (Laughland-Booy et al. 2018), weak relationships between young people and political parties (Sweetser, 2015), and increasing voter turnout due to political efficacy (Condon, 2013).

Others study the efforts to increase first-time voter participation, such as through volunteer activities (Suryanef, 2020), social media (Ohme, 2018), newspapers (Quarles, 1979), the internet (Drummond, 2006), regulations (Birch and Lodge. 2015), direct communication (Mohammed, 2013), pre-registration (Holbein, 2014), political education (Pebriyenni, 2020; Adofo, 2022), communication through campaigns (Ghergina, 2021), television, and personal networks (Capadocia et al 2008), issues close to them (Zamhasari, 2017).

However, not enough time has been devoted to understanding why and what first-time voters vote. One reason for this is the assumption that first-time voters do not behave differently from other, more experienced voters. First-time voters are commonly considered to lack political understanding. New voters are often considered unprepared, especially when participating in political activities such as elections for the first time, in contrast to adult voter segments with voting experience (Yoldaş, 2015). They are thought to base their decisions on previously held biases and are susceptible to information bias (including echo chambers), party identification, or socialization with candidates (Gherghina and Tap, 2020).

Few studies have investigated which attributes are most relevant in shaping voters' preferences for politicians. However, while personal attributes play an important role in elections and representation, few studies have investigated in depth which specific characteristics — such as gender, age, experience, and prior experience — are most relevant in shaping voter preferences.

(Horiuchi et al 2020). Based on previous studies, none have used first-time voters as research subjects.

Research on the behavior of novice voters focuses on the factors that shape their decisions. The political behavior of the younger generation lies in the use of alternative media for political references (Howell et al. 2010), statistical surveys (Abdullah, 2018), political references from parents (Bhatti, 2012), and social media as an alternative campaign (Ohme, 2019).

This research will look at the political behavior of the younger generation but not at underlying influences, such as the level of internet usage of the younger generation or their religion and social status. This research will look directly at young people's ideal political choices. This research uses a conjoint experiment to examine young people's political preferences. The main idea is that first-time voters evaluate various candidate characteristics and decide which one is more relevant to them for each voting decision. The main purpose of conjoint experiment is to assign different values to the alternatives a buyer might consider when making a purchase decision. With this knowledge, candidates can target the most important product or service features and design messages that are more relevant to the target voters.

This research aims to show the characteristics that first-time voters prefer in a legislative candidate. It is important to note that my design is not intended to be a realistic simulation of actual voting conditions and processes in various electoral contexts in Indonesia. Rather, the study was specifically designed to activate respondents' factual understanding of the choices surrounding voters and investigate how this activation affects how they evaluate politicians' attributes

1.2 Research Question

Discussions about the behavior of first-time voters have not reached a precise level because most of them are concerned with turn-out problems. Although several attributes can explain the consideration of first-time voters in the face of various options, such as personal attributes, educational attainment, age, experience, campaign props, social media, and political parties (Horiuchi et al 2020, Sirait et al 2022, McClean and Ono, 2020, Cox and Katz 1996, Tang and Lee 2018, Kruikemier 2014, Eafly and Chaiken 1993), more research that seeks to explain first-time voters' behavior needs to be carried out. Current explanations on how first-time voters are insufficient in elaborating on why first-time voters vote the way they do. The reason for selecting the profile of legislative members is that there are more legislative than executive political choices in general elections. In simpler terms, first-time voters can better compare legislative candidates due to the wider range of options available. The selection of candidates by first-time voters is primarily based on the election of people's representatives at the central level (DPR), with consideration given to familiarity, which is often a result of extensive coverage in television media. This occurs because members of the national legislature play a vital role in crafting national legislation, making them more recognizable than their counterparts at the provincial and city/district levels. Consequently, this study aims to address the question: What attributes do first-time voters prefer in a legislative candidate?

1.3 Objective of Study

This study aims to demonstrate the characteristics first-time voters prefer in a legislative candidate. It is important to note that my design is not intended to be a realistic simulation of actual voting conditions and processes in various electoral contexts in Indonesia. In contrast, this research was specifically designed to activate respondents' factual understanding of the choices that exist around voters and investigate how this activation influences the way they evaluate politicians' attributes. In this regard, it is also important to note that I did not place my experiment in the context of a specific election that occurred in the real world because I am aware that there are many things that we may not have been able to predict in this study. But it is at least useful for gauging respondents' preferences for politicians' attributes, without inadvertently encouraging them to associate the hypothetical politicians presented in my experiment with actual politicians.

1.4 Significance of Study

The case of Indonesia provides an important institutional foundation for analyzing voters' preferences in electing politicians based on the different types of ballots available. Indonesia implements four different electoral systems, such as the open-list representative election (PR) system for the lower house of parliament, first tier, and central parliament, as well as the single representative transferable vote (SNTV) system for regional representatives, and direct presidential elections. This variety creates promising opportunities to explain how voters compare available candidates when faced with multiple options. To understand these dynamics, my research randomly provides respondents with information about the electoral context within the prevailing system in Indonesia. As such, this study explores how voters make decisions in this complex context, where they face many options and different types of elections.

The research findings on the preferred characteristics of first-time voters will be important in building theories of first-time voter behavior. Practically, these findings will be useful for interested groups concerned with the development of political behavior, particularly in developing countries such as Indonesia. The reason for choosing the study of first-time voters in Indonesia is that Indonesian voters are faced with five types of ballots: President, Upper House, Regional Upper House, Lower House 1, and Lower House 2. This can cause a lot of confusion among first-time voters as they face making political choices on each ballot sheet, given the number of parties and candidates within a party.

On the other hand, studies on different types of electoral incentives are still a matter of debate. For example, studies on electoral incentives suggest that electoral incentives for candidates to emphasize party labels or personalistic appeals vary depending on the voting structure. Norris divides these incentives into four levels: First, the greatest personal incentives come from candidate ballots. Second, moderate incentives to emphasize personal appeal come from preference ballots, used in open party-list PR systems that allow preferential voting where voters can rank their ballot choices from candidates within the same party. Third, incentives are distinct because they are used in combined systems where voters can express their preferences through candidate and preferential or party ballots. Fourth, the biggest incentives

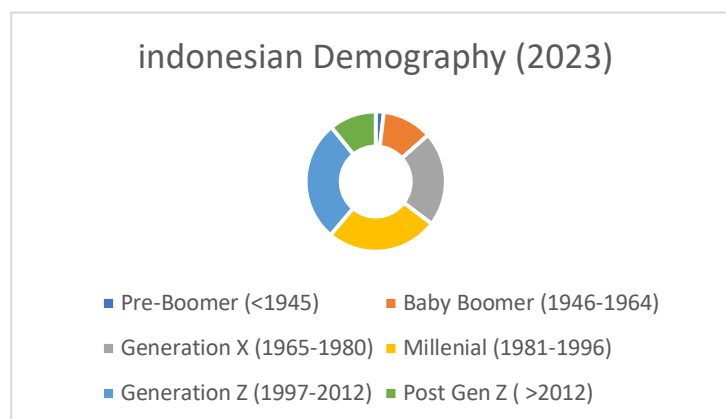
to emphasize their collective record are in the context of party voting, which is used in proportional electoral systems with closed party lists. Norris has not explained how open-list PR provides incentives for candidates or parties. Indonesia is a country with an open-list PR system.

Theoretically, this research will significantly contribute to the theory of voter behavior. Through a conjoint experiment, which has great internal validity, this research will explain how first-time voters behave, especially in Jakarta, an area in Indonesia that has a population density of 15,978 people per square kilometer. Second, this research will explain which theory is the most influential in explaining voting behavior because the conjoint experiment compares various theories. This research will conclude, from the many theories of first-time voter behavior, which one has the most significant influence.

Empirically, this study is important because Generation Z makes up the largest population group in Indonesia. Gen-Z are those born after 1995, the first group to grow up with a network of connections connected to the internet. Generation Z has found new pathways to identity and trusted communities by exploring the opportunities offered by online networks that are part of their daily lives (Katz et al., 2022). Generation Z considers their phones an integral part of their lives, and what they see and read on their phones is what their friends discuss when they are physically together, as well as on social media and text messages. This is a consequence of living with such great technological proximity.

Politicians strategically targeted Gen Z voters in their campaign to win the 2024 elections. Based on Statistics Indonesia (BPS) data, 27.94% percent of voters are Gen-Z. It's no wonder that many parties, presidential candidates, and politicians use social media to attract Gen-Z as they are the most important source of votes besides Millennials. Gen Z are social media users, so politicians are trying to appeal to them and get their vote by having a presence on social media.

Meanwhile, almost a quarter of voters in Indonesia are first-time voters. Based on a General Elections Commission (KPU) report, as many as 46,800,161 voters or 22.85% are Generation Z voters (KPU, 2023). This large proportion provides a new, interesting opportunity for the study of voter behavior.



Source: Directorate Dukcapil

This research will contribute to this study of voter demographics, particularly in the context of a developing democratic country like Indonesia, because first-time voters make up nearly 25 percent of all voters.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

2.1 Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

In the context of PR open-list systems, voters are given the freedom to select their preferred candidates from lists compiled by political parties, and the order in which candidates win seats is determined by the number of votes they receive. This system allows voters to express their preferences directly against individual candidates on party lists, providing greater involvement in the electoral process (Marsh, 1985). In this context, the direct link between a candidate's performance and the support received from voters becomes very important, as candidates directly compete for votes.

In addition, open-list systems provide an opportunity for politicians to cater to the specific needs and interests of their constituents (Ames, 1995; Carey and Shugart, 1995; Crisp et al., 2004; Hallerberg and Marier, 2004; Ashworth and Bueno de Mesquita, 2006; Grimmer et al., 2012). This creates a dynamic that encourages candidates to compete to demonstrate their qualities and competencies to voters. In this competition, voters have the opportunity to evaluate and select candidates based on the qualities displayed by each candidate (Hangartner, 2019).

In this study, I consider various attributes that may influence first-time voters' preferences for candidates. These include campaign strategies such as candidates' use of social media and conventional media, as well as candidates' personal characteristics, such as age, education, and experience (Horiuchi, 2020). My hypothesis indicates that campaign strategies may be favored by first-time voters over personal attributes, suggesting that candidates who can effectively communicate their campaign messages to voters have the potential to gain greater support.

2.1.1 Personal Attributes in Open-list PR System

In the context of an open-list system, where voters have the freedom to choose individual candidates from existing parties, candidate characteristics play an important role in the electoral process. The winner in a political election is determined by the order of candidates on the party list, based on the number of individual votes received by each candidate. Although this system provides wide freedom to voters, as candidates from the same party compete against each other for votes, it can lead to fierce internal competition and possibly also divisions between parties.

In an attempt to gain voter support, candidates tend to emphasize their personal appeal. This can include their track record in delivering public services in their area and their leadership qualities, such as relevant background and experience. Efforts are also made to build a strong personal reputation in the eyes of voters. On the other hand, candidates also often highlight

party appeals, such as the party's overall track record, policy programs offered, and the competence of the leadership team (Norris, 2004).

Given the importance of understanding voter behavior and candidate characteristics in the context of an open-list system, this study aims to explore the relationship between these two aspects through an experiment. The particular focus is to understand the behavioral patterns of voters, especially first-time voters, by comparing different candidate characteristics. As such, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the dynamics of political elections in an open-list system, particularly in the context of first-time voters.

Existing theories suggest that observed attributes of politicians tend to vary across different electoral contexts (Horiuchi, 2020). Proportional representation (PR) systems play an important role in determining the extent to which elected legislators display various attributes that can attract private votes. The likelihood of these attributes being displayed by a legislative candidate is influenced by whether the candidate list is open or closed (Shugart et al., 2005). Indonesia, as a country with an open-list PR electoral system, is an arena for debate among researchers about the benefits that this system offers to candidates. In general, open-list PR provides a broader platform for candidates to compete, allowing them to maximize their potential in attracting votes.

Personal attributes are a crucial factor in open-list PR systems. Attributes such as regional origin and previous electoral experience provide voters with a substantial indication of politicians' knowledge of and commitment to local needs (Shughart, 2005). The core of this argument is that open-list PR provides significant benefits to several entities in the election, such as educational attainment, age, experience status, and residency (Horiuchi et al., 2022). Candidates have the opportunity to maximize their characteristics, such as voicing local issues and tailoring their campaigns to the characteristics of the local population (Blumenau et al., 2017; Bräuninger, 2021; Jankowski, 2016).

While politicians can adjust their behavior to increase electoral appeal, there are limitations in changing more objective attributes. Campaign mechanisms are set up to convey political messages to voters, but more fundamental personal attributes cannot always be manipulated easily (Shugart, 2005). Therefore, this study directs its focus on how these attributes are considered and influence the behavior of voters, especially first-time voters, in the context of an open-list PR system.

2.1.2 First-time voter behavior

First of all, it is important to consider the social media factor in young voters' electoral influence on candidate characteristics. Based on Ghergina's (2016) research, it is revealed that there are different causal mechanisms for young voters being influenced by election campaigns or by their own attitudes before the campaign. Those who trust politicians, find their campaigns informative, and actively use social media, tend to be influenced by election campaigns on social media platforms.

Political information obtained through social media is much more likely to influence first-time voters than traditional news channels (Wolfsfeld, Yarchi and Samuel-Azran, 2016). Given the ease of access, the main source of information for first-time voters about candidates' election campaigns is their Facebook accounts, where they are exposed to information and opinions presented in different contexts (Sides et al., 2020). Also, candidates have the opportunity to interact directly with voters through social media, creating a more personalized and interactive proximity (Lee and Oh, 2012). By sharing personal experiences on platforms such as Facebook, politicians contribute to the individualization and privatization of their politics (Lee et al., 2018), strive for a closer relationship with potential voters, and display human sides of their lives that can be digested by everyone.

The effects of social media are now becoming more and more evident. New literature is studying the political impacts of social media, such as virtual protests (Howard et al., 2011; Enikolopov et al., 2020; Acemoglu et al., 2017; Fergusson and Molina, 2021), xenophobia (Mu'ller and Schwarz, 2020; Mu'ller and Schwarz, 2019; Bursztyn et al., 2019), and mental health (Braghieri et al., 2021). In addition, the developing experimental research field focuses on social media. Bonds et al. (2012) and Jones et al. (2017) provide evidence that online messages on social networks affect voter turnout. Allcott et al. (2020) and Mosquera et al. (2020) found that individuals who deactivate Facebook react in various dimensions, including several measurements of political polarization. Levy (2021) studies the impact of determining the subscription of Facebook users randomly to conservative or liberal media. Guarantee et al. (2018) estimate the impact of Twitter users who pay to follow the bots of the opponent's political ideology messages. Besson et al. (2022) studied how Facebook influences the behavior of Brazilian politicians. Rotesi (2019) found that social media had a negative impact on the vote acquisition of the Democratic Party in the 2008-2016 presidential election using variations in Twitter adoption due to the transfer of NBA players with Twitter accounts.

Most related to my thesis is the latest research published by Fujiwara (2023), about how content on social media can persuade voters to vote or not choose a candidate, and Bossetta (2018), who wrote about the digital architectural aspects of a platform affecting political communication on social media — network structure, functionality, algorithmic filter, and data fiction. Each of the four elements of the platform design infrastructure has an impact on the decisions made by political campaigns in terms of the audience to be reached, the shape and content of the message produced, the pattern of spreading the messages, and how financial resources are allocated for digital political campaigns on social media. Additionally, the results of an experimental survey conducted by Morris (2017) show that campaign messages about candidates sent via Twitter — apart from the focus of the candidate — can be received by prospective voters as strongly as the message sent through traditional media.

Do first-time voters who actively use social media make their candidate preferences based on information from these platforms? While many studies support the idea that social media is a new medium for campaign socialization, fewer can explain how social media directly affects voter preferences. Moller (2013) argues that social media campaigning may not necessarily mobilize votes for political parties. This could be because parties have failed to effectively develop their social media presence, making them less attractive than in the past. We argue that

three key elements for social media success are often lacking: strategies, resources, and the right mindset. Assuming these elements are in place, parties should focus on two areas: mobilizing supporters to expand beyond their immediate network and using data for micro-targeting by localizing and personalizing communication output.

The other strategy that I refer to in this study is the use of billboards for political campaigns (Tshuma, 2021; Ezegwu et al 2015; Inobemhe et al) in elections. Arguments have been made about direct contact and/or interactions with candidates. Among young people, direct interactions with candidates are strongly associated with higher participation rates (Neimi, 2010). In explaining the argument, the young people recalled being contacted by candidates and there was a higher voter turnout. A comparison was made to the situation in which young people were not contacted. In the case when they recalled face-to-face contact and letters or emails, the number of voters who turned up at the polls was higher.

These studies show that the debate between conventional and digital political campaigns is still ongoing. Some experts argue that digital campaigns are more effective than conventional campaigns, while others argue that conventional campaigns are still effective. The selection of the right type of campaign depends on certain factors, such as voter targets, campaign budgets, and campaign strategies.

The idea that a candidate would be more likely to win support from younger voters based on their popularity was put to the test by Sevi (2021). As a result, even though the impacts were quite small, he discovered some support for both theories. This implies that voters who are closer to a leader's age are more likely to support them and to find them more popular. Sevi provides evidence that voters are somewhat influenced by the age of political leaders. Conversely, a wider age difference between the leader and the electorate decreases the chance that the former will support the latter and show favouritism for the former. In this instance, the information backs up his theory, despite the anticipated. Conversely, a wider age difference between the leader and the electorate decreases the chance that the former will support the latter and show favouritism for the former. In this instance, despite the extremely tiny expected effect, the findings are consistent with his hypothesis. It is assumed that first-time voters will support politicians who are similar in age to them as they will be more aware of the needs of individuals who share their circumstances.

These studies collectively show that people favor candidates who are similar to themselves in age. Additional studies indicate that there might be valid explanations for this. For instance, a study by Curry and Haydon (2018) demonstrates that meaningful representation in Congress is influenced by the members' ages. Politicians' ages influence how much emphasis they pay to topics that are significant to older people. Curry and Haydon (2018) examined proposals that were introduced in Congress between 2005 and 2008 and discovered that older legislators were more likely to introduce topics that were thought to affect the elderly, such as regulations on nursing homes, elder abuse, and continuing education. In a different study, Charles T. McClean (2019) showed that higher representation of younger candidates in Japanese mayoral elections from 2004 to 2017 led to higher municipal spending on child welfare through a regression discontinuity methodology. The aforementioned considerations demonstrate that the

inclination to vote for a politician based on their age is contingent upon the concerns the candidate is expected to address.

2.2 Research Hypotheses

I first considered the candidates' social media behavior toward Gen-Z voters. I considered two main points: how candidates provide informative content for voters and how social media accounts become a medium for interaction between candidates and voters. Providing information is represented by whether or not a candidate frequently presents information that attracts voters. This can be fairly well represented by TikTok's For You Page (FYP), viral tweets, and viral Instagram reels. Meanwhile, the highest level of interaction is how often candidates engage in two-way dialogue. For example, on the social media application TikTok, how often does the candidate go live on TikTok and greet TikTok viewers? On their Twitter account, how often does the candidate reply to comments from followers? If these patterns are consistent with theoretical expectations, then how social media interactions connect candidates with voters will increase the potential electability of candidates. The argument underlying this variable is that candidates who are participative on social media will be more likely to be chosen by voters. The argument underlying this variable is that candidates who are interactive on social media will tend to be chosen more by voters because they are more accessible to first-time voters.

The second is the influence of conventional campaigns. What I mean in this research is the use of billboards for political campaigns (Tshuma, 2021; Ezegwu et al. 2015; Inobemhe et al). In addition, among young people, direct contact or interaction with candidates is strongly associated with higher levels of participation (Neimi, 2010), better known as *blusukan*.

When explaining their voting decisions, young voters often recalled being contacted by candidates. This contact seemed to influence their choices, leading them to vote for candidates who had reached out to them. The study compared those who remembered being contacted with those who didn't. Among those who recalled face-to-face interactions, letters, or emails from candidates, voter turnout was significantly higher. Direct contact between candidates and first-time voters is a crucial factor to consider. However, it's important to note that this contact shouldn't be limited to mere encounters. The argument is that while meetings are logically important, they alone are not sufficient. Candidates may easily forget voters if these meetings are accidental or lack meaningful two-way interaction.

Given the importance of direct interaction, I detailed the types of contact that seem most effective: meeting in person, visiting directly, and engaging in dialogue where voters can express their opinions. If candidates meet first-time voters in person frequently and engage in meaningful interactions, these voters are more likely to support them at the polls

I next considered these four personal attributes: age, experience, residency, and educational background (Horiuchi et al 2020). Regarding age, first-time voters will choose candidates who are close in age to them; this means there is an assumption that they will understand the needs of those who live with the same conditions. The theoretical expectations that I place on the age variable are based on the expectation that voters will tend to choose those who are close in age.

So, the baseline of the age argument is that the closer the candidate's age is to the voter, the greater the possibility of voting.

Regarding experience, I mean candidates who have had previous political roles such as in regional administrations. Politicians who have served in regional positions — which is an important measure of local ties and experience — are found more at the district level serving local communities rather than at the larger, public relations level. This is in line with expectations. The assumption is that those who have experience will be able to work well compared to those who have no experience.

Regarding educational backgrounds, candidates who have a higher education level will be considered more educated. Arceneaux et al (2023) found evidence that candidates with higher levels of education win more votes than candidates with lower levels of education, even after we account for standard indicators of candidate quality and campaign spending. I will use the candidate's education level as a predictor of voter confidence. My argument is that candidates with a higher level of education will be more likely to be voted.

To add significant differences between candidates, I added party type for the next variable. Indonesia's parties are categorized into four groups according to their ideology (Baswedan 2004, Tanuwidjaja, 2010). Exclusively secular are parties that firmly reject Islamic-inspired political agendas. In contrast, secular-inclusive parties are open to accommodating Islamic-inspired agendas. However, both groups reject the idea of an Islamic state. The Inclusive Islamic Party is a party that has the Pancasila ideology but is very closely related to Islamic mass organizations such as Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). They promote pluralism and reject the establishment of an Islamic state. Lastly, Islamists openly or implicitly agree with the establishment of an Islamic state. Among the parties that participated in the 2004 elections, the PDI-P is considered exclusively secular, Demokrat, Gerindra, and NasDem are inclusively secular, PAN and PKB inclusively Islamic, and PKS, PBB, PPP, and PBR are Islamist. Although I am not convinced that first-time voters understand the context of differences between political parties in Indonesia, the only clear distinction is Baswedan and Tanuwijaya's party type. Meanwhile, other party types such as Gunther and Diamond's (2003) catch-all, programmatic, and personalistic are more difficult to distinguish between parties. Thus, Baswedan's (2004) party type is more likely to distinguish parties in Indonesia.

Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1: Individual attributes such as education, age, residency, and work experience are likely to increase a candidate's chances of being elected.

Hypothesis 1A

More educated candidates are more likely to be elected than those with a lower level of education.

Education serves as a distinguishing factor among candidates, allowing voters to differentiate between them based on their academic achievements. Candidates can display their educational titles on the ballot, highlighting these differences. The level of education creates a hierarchy,

with high school education generally considered lower than a bachelor's degree, and postgraduate education viewed as superior to a bachelor's degree. Education can enhance a candidate's electability as it is often associated with increased competence (Sirait, et al. 2022). Krasno and Green (1988) note that voters tend to prefer educated candidates over less educated ones, perceiving education as an indicator of competence and expertise. For instance, the Positive Education Effects Hypothesis suggests that American voters in US House elections take candidate education seriously, favoring more educated candidates (Arceneaux, K., & Vander Wielen, R. J. 2023). Additionally, voters perceive politicians who have attended elite universities as more competent (Gift, T., & Lastra-Anadón, C. X., 2018).

Hypothesis 1 B

Younger candidates are more likely to be elected than their older counterparts.

Several studies support this argument. Voters in McClean and Yono's experiments disliked elderly candidates the most but viewed younger candidates as equally favorable as middle-aged candidates. McClean, C., & Ono, Y. (2020). Sevi (2021) tested the hypothesis that a leader is more popular among voters closer to them in age and that such voters are more likely to vote for them. Sevi found some support for both hypotheses, although the effects were very small. However, Roberts and Wolak (2023) found few differences in people's willingness to support a younger candidate than an older candidate. In fact, when looking at patterns of approval in Congress, older members have a lower approval rating than younger ones.

Hypothesis 1 C

Candidates who are from the area are more likely to be elected than candidates who hail from somewhere else.

Campbell, R and Cowley (2014) found in their experimental scenarios the effect of a candidate's place of residence continues to have a sizeable impact on candidate evaluations. Also, Arzheimer, K., & Evans, J. (2012) found that the distance between voters and candidates of the three main parties (Conservatives, Labour, and Liberal Democrats) matters in British constituencies, even when controlling for strong predictors of vote choice. Because of this, candidates tend to look for candidates who live near their homes, and those surveyed are expected to be more likely to support local candidates Górecki, M. A., & Marsh, M. (2012). For instance, the general elections for governors and senators from 46 states during the period 1976 to 1982 were examined, and the results showed that the average candidate received 3.66 percentage points more in the general election vote in his "home district" than other candidates from the same party but different (Rice and Macht 1987). In addition, new voters were mobilized to support local candidates, and regular voters who were usually loyal to candidates from other parties were converted to cast their votes for home region candidates.

Hypothesis 1 D

Candidates with more experience are more likely to be elected than those who do not.

There are strong arguments to support this argument, such as the valuation of politicians' experience (Lee, 2001). This argument explains how a politician receives a good assessment

from voters because he is considered to have value for working in his sector, in this case, the political sector. The mechanism is that voters directly assess a politician's ability to engage in the legislative process, and the goal is to estimate those assessments in terms of congressional experience. Moreover, A rational and simple entry argument suggests that the value of experience consists not only of direct impacts, reflecting the value of resources (such as staff) attached to legislative office, but also of indirect impacts, reflecting the fact that stronger challengers are less likely to have the opportunity to obtain legislative office. Cox, G. W., & Katz, J. N. (1996). Also, having been in office provides its own advantages. If all things are equal, then we can predict that members of parliament will have better performance than challengers in their party (Norris, 1992)

Hypothesis 2

Ability and familiarity with social media tend to increase a candidate's chances of being elected.

2 A

Candidates with more viral social media content are more likely to be elected than those who don't have them.

Social media could have a positive impact on candidates and the public's familiarity with them. Tang and Lee (2018) examine how the relationship between social media performance and election momentum varies according to candidates' background characteristics, including age, political affiliation, experience status, and the campaign scale of the political group to which the candidate belongs. Tang and Lee's research results show that candidates' social media performance can indeed predict vote acquisition indirectly through the mediation of election momentum. The predictive power of social media performance is stronger for pro-democracy candidates, experienced candidates, and candidates belonging to political groups with larger election campaigns.

Sheafer, T., & Tzionit, S. (2006) explain that political-media skills have a strong impact on the electoral success of 81 Israeli Knesset Members. The legislative members expressed a clear interaction with the selection method and showed that political-media skills have a greater impact on more democratic selection methods. Also, Springs and Jacobs (2014) stated that theoretically, there are two types of impact, described as the direct impact of the number of followers a candidate has and the statistical interaction effect. The more followers they have, the more votes they get when the candidate actively uses social media. Springs and Jacobs (2014) used a unique dataset that combines social media usage data and the candidates' own data (such as position on the list, popularity, long media exposure, gender, ethnicity, and experience). The data set includes information on 493 candidates from 10 parties who won at least one seat in the 2010 Dutch elections. It turns out that the candidates were eager to use social media, but relatively few people followed the candidates. There is a significant interaction effect between social media use and number of followers, but this effect appears to be relatively small. However, candidates who personalize receive higher evaluations of social presence and parasocial interactions. For female candidates who share a party they support

with respondents, personalization leads to a sense of presence and parasocial interaction. Ultimately, the feeling of intimacy created by personalized Tweets led respondents to express support for candidate personalization, but this effect depended on gender and status within the candidate's party (McGregor 2018).

Hypothesis 2 B

Candidates who receive more engagement from their social media content is more likely to be elected than those who don't have much engagement.

Kruikemeier, S.'s (2014) findings show that Twitter use has positive consequences for political candidates. Candidates who used Twitter during their campaigns received more votes than candidates who did not use Twitter, and interactive use of Twitter also had a positive impact. Schmitt-Beck, R., & Mackenrodt, C. (2010) stated that personal communication is more influential than mass communication. The impact of the media is generally weaker than that of social networks. Moreover, this is mediated by attitudes, whereas social networks have a strong direct effect. This mainly comes from information conveyed through personal contact with voters and abstainers in the immediate social circle. Social voting norms only matter if they originate in one's family and support electoral participation.

Hypothesis 3

Candidates who directly interact with potential voters during their campaign have a better chance of being elected.

Hypothesis 3 A

Candidates who engage in *blusukan* (impromptu visits, especially at the local level) are more likely to be elected than those who don't.

So far, no research has been conducted to test the direct relationship between *blusukan* and electability. However, my literature strongly states that *blusukan* can provide a strong factor for a candidate's victory (Zulkarnain and Haris (2017). Wekke, (2021). Johnindra, (2019). Gama, et al (2020). Kurniawan, D. (2015).

Hypothesis 3 B

Candidates utilizing more billboards as part of their campaigns are more likely to be elected than those with fewer number of billboards.

Based on the research of Csapó-Horváth & Makkos (2022) and concerning the results of the 2022 elections in Hungary, we can say that the visual and easy-to-understand representation of FIDESZ-KDNP's simple message had a greater impact on voters than the textual message of the United for Hungary coalition. Tshumma's study found that billboards were able to depict Zimbabwe's incumbent party F using billboards to sell and change the image of his party in the election, which was widely heralded as a visionary presidential candidate, while the party promised voters a better economic environment that depended on engagement. Returning to former colonial countries and their enemies, the incumbency also promised a socio-political environment where Zimbabweans regardless of race and ethnicity can live side by side peacefully, a phenomenon that was unfamiliar during Mugabe's rule. (Tshumma, 2021)

Hypothesis 4

The party with which a candidate identifies affects the candidate’s chances of being elected.

Eagly and Chaiken (1993) define this as a party signal. They are pieces of information that allow conclusions without detailed knowledge and difficult cognitive processes (Eagly and Chaiken, 1993; Rucker and Petty, 2006 in Bullock, 2019). In a political context, signals have various forms, such as support for interest groups and preferred candidates, but the signals that are most easily obtained and reliable by voters are party signals (Downs, 1957). In the United States, where the majority of voters identify themselves as members of the Democratic or Republican Party, the public effectively shapes policy preferences on complex issues using their own party identification and party cues (Zaller, 1992; Green et al., 2002; Cohen, 2003; Kam, 2005; Bullock, 2011). To illustrate, Kam (2005) tested the influence of party cues on policy preferences by manipulating party issue positions in newspaper articles about food irradiation. The results showed that party identifiers supported food irradiation more when they read that their own party supported it. This suggests that party identifiers utilize party cues to form policy preferences consistent with their party's positions. In short, party cues enable voters with limited policy information to form “apparently rational” policy preferences.

If one of the four hypotheses is proven, we will have conclusive evidence of the candidate characteristics desired by first-time voters in this study. To test the hypotheses, I estimated the average marginal component effect (AMCE) of each attribute value (Hainmueller, Hopkins and Yamamoto 2014) on various outcomes. Bansak, et al (2023) explained that the average marginal component effect (AMCE) is an aggregation of individual-level preferences that is meaningful both theoretically and empirically. AMCE represents a multidimensional summary of voters' preferences that combines direction and intensity based on a probabilistic generalization of Borda's rule. They show why combining the direction and intensity of multi-attribute preferences is critical for analyzing real-world elections, where ceteris paribus comparisons almost never occur. Second, and to support this point empirically, Bansak, et al (2023) show how this aggregation translates directly into key quantities of concern to election experts. This allows researchers to estimate the impact of changes in an attribute on the expected vote share of a candidate or party.

Table 1 Attributes of Candidate

Variable	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	
Social Media Content Frequently Appearance	Rare	Most		
Social Media Interaction	Rare	Most interacted		
Numbers of Billboard	Rare	Most		
<i>Blusukan</i>	Rare	Most		

Age	21-30	31-40	>41	
Experience	Newcomer	Incumbent		
Educational attainment	High school	Bachelor's degree	Postgraduate	
Local Residency	Next home	Next subdistrict	Next district	
Party type	Nationalist (PDI-P)	Nationalist Islam (Golkar, Demokrat)	Islam nationalist (PAN, PKB)	Islamist (PKS)

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 Research Method

To answer the research question, I used a conjoint experiment. Initially, a conjoint experiment was used to analyze marketing research. The conjoint experiment is a common methodology used in marketing to find out how buyers make trade-offs among competing products and suppliers. Conjoint experiments present descriptions of alternative products or services constructed from fractional factorial experimental designs. They use various models to infer buyer share values for attribute levels and feed those share values into buyer choice simulators to predict how buyers will choose products and services. So far, thousands of applications of conjoint experiments have been carried out over the last four decades. A conjoint experiment is a statistical technique used primarily in market research to understand how people value different features of a product or service. This technique helps estimate the relative importance of various attributes by analyzing the trade-offs that respondents are willing to make among various attributes.

In political science, a conjoint experiment allows researchers to identify nonparametrically to estimate the causal effects of many components simultaneously. As with real-world elections, in Hainmueller's (2014) experiment, respondents were given candidate profiles and then asked to decide on their electability. This research uses discrete choice analysis. Discrete choice analysis describes the decisionmaker's choice among a set of alternatives based on their utility value. The choices or responses are in the form of nominal data, and respondents choose the one that has the highest (maximum) utility value.

A key feature of the conjoint experiment is that it captures revealed preferences rather than stated preferences. Instead of asking respondents to rate or rank attributes directly, which may introduce bias, a conjoint experiment gives respondents a choice between various profiles (combinations of attributes). By choosing their preferred profile, respondents reveal their true preferences indirectly. This method mimics real-world decision-making more closely as respondents are forced to make trade-offs.

In a conjoint experiment, respondents are presented with a series of profiles, each representing a different combination of attribute levels. They are asked to select their preferred profile from each set. By analyzing these choices, researchers can determine the utility value (preference score) for each attribute level. Higher utility values indicate greater preference. This approach allows estimation of the relative importance of different attributes by examining how variations in attribute levels affect choices.

Another important aspect of the conjoint experiment is the estimation of attribute importance conditionally, meaning the importance of one attribute is evaluated in the context of other attributes. This reflects the reality of decision-making, where choices are rarely made based on a single attribute alone.

In market analysis, the conjoint experiment is useful in various applications, such as product design, market segmentation, and pricing strategies. It provides detailed insights into how different attributes influence consumer choices, helping businesses understand what features are most valued by their target market. In the analysis of voter behavior in politics, a conjoint experiment can predict and explain political choices, policy products, and voter preferences.

Despite its strengths, the conjoint experiment has some limitations. The scenarios presented to respondents are hypothetical, meaning there are no real costs or real-world consequences to their choices. This can sometimes lead to behaviors that differ from actual purchase decisions. In addition, designing a conjoint study and analyzing the data can be complex, requiring specialized knowledge in experimental design and statistical analysis.

In conjoint experiments, respondents are asked to select (discrete choice conjoint experiment) and/or rate (rank-based conjoint experiment) a set of possible alternatives (e.g., candidates to vote for, policy proposals to pass) resulting from the random variation of an unlimited number of factors, orthogonal to each other, that can assume multiple values. The analysis consists of estimating the simultaneous independent causal effect — average marginal component effect (AMCE) — of various features of a multidimensional object on the respondent's decision.

First-time voters will face dozens of candidate options alternately with their characteristic choices. The options will be randomized according to the attributes of each variable. They will be faced with their level of confidence in these choices. From various options, experiments were made to see their belief patterns so that this research could explain their behavior in choosing. My results will be not generalizable to a wider population, but this study is nevertheless able to highlight similarities with recent public opinion studies (Hainmueller, Hopkins, and Yamamoto 2014).

To examine what kind of characteristics are needed by first-time voters, this research tries to study how first-time voters behave. To ensure that the choice of novice voters follows their actual behavior, this research uses the conjoint experiment method. The advantage of the conjoint experiment method over surveys is that it can present limited options that condition voters to continue to choose based on what they want. Conjoint experiment techniques are commonly used to evaluate voters' preferences for politicians' attributes and policy positions (e.g., Franchino and Zucchini, 2015; Carnes and Lupu, 2016; Horiuchi, 2016).

3.2 Research Design and Data

I conducted a survey experiment in April 2023. An online sample of Indonesian students in the east of Jakarta, the country's most populous metropolis, was used for the survey to include a range of backgrounds and political perspectives. I chose to gather data using samples that I had taken from public schools. Over 700 of the 800 respondents to my survey (a completion rate of 88.9 percent) finished the tasks in my conjoint experiment. The Appendix has a thorough explanation of the sample's demographics. Because every respondent assessed four candidate pairs, my data contains 16,898 evaluated profiles, or 8,459 pairings.

The decisions made by the respondents are the relevant outcome variables. To categorize their answers to my question on candidate choice, I created a binary variable. A value of one meant the respondent supported the candidate and a value of zero meant they did not. In addition, we gathered personal data from our participants, such as gender, age, level of education, and political affiliation. The statistical method established by Hainmueller, Hopkins, and Yamamoto (2014) was applied to the collected data analysis to estimate the average marginal component effect (AMCE) of each attribute in the likelihood that the candidate will be selected. This is done by averaging over all possible combinations of the other candidate attributes.

This study was conducted in Indonesia, a country with an open-list PR system that selects five ballots simultaneously. The reasons for this simultaneous selection are sufficient arguments as to why this study is appropriate to be held in Indonesia. We can imagine how many options there are for voters to choose from during a fairly short time — voting takes place over just one day. However, the limitation in this study is that I conducted my survey through non-probability sampling. The sampling technique employed in this study was cluster sampling, where data is gathered from participants within specific clusters (Brown, 2010). In this case, the clusters were schools, with the study being conducted at state high schools SMAN 9 Jakarta, SMAN 48 Jakarta, and SMAN 67 Jakarta. I selected the sampling areas based on the fact that the largest number of voters in Jakarta live in the East Jakarta area (KPU, 2024). These schools were chosen because they had the greatest number of students in East Jakarta, so the possibility of getting many respondents would be higher. So, this study is only valid in my case. This study is a non-probability study. Even though the respondents chose not to be based on probability, the data collected would not damage the entirety of this study because the aim was to find causal inferences, not statistical inferences.

The design of this study employs a paired profile conjoint analysis, where two candidates' profiles are presented in a table format resembling a curriculum vitae with three columns. The first column lists the attribute names, while the second and third columns display the attribute values for the first and second profiles, respectively. Respondents are asked to vote for or reject a candidate based on these profiles. This combined design differs from the traditional voting leaflet format, but it offers a potential advantage: applicant information is more readily accessible to respondents. After reviewing the criteria for both candidates, respondents will be asked about their confidence in their choice. The level of confidence will be measured by whether respondents choose to vote or not vote for a candidate. This approach allows for a more nuanced understanding of respondents' decision-making processes and the strength of their preferences.

The conjoint assumptions are as follows: Candidates are described in terms of attribute levels. For each attribute, I added specific levels. For example, the For You Page (FYP) attribute has two levels: frequent or infrequent. The age attribute has three levels: 21-30, 30-40, and above 40. Each attribute level has a utility. The presence of frequent FYP suggests that the candidate creates engaging content. Regarding age, I emphasize candidates who are in the same age group as voters, as they are considered to better understand young people's problems. I also included work experience as a legislative member, which indicates the candidate has valuable experience in governance. The appeal of a candidate is the sum of the utilities of their attribute

levels. An ideal candidate would have advantages at each level. For example, a candidate who frequently appears on FYP, is interactive, often visits constituents, is of a similar age to voters, has legislative experience, and higher education would have the highest utility. People are more likely to choose candidates with higher utility. Therefore, candidates with these ideal attributes are more likely to be chosen by first-time voters.

This research has limitations due to the lack of prior studies on young voters and time constraints. As a non-probability sampling study, it focuses more on internal validity, following the principles of conjoint analysis. Conjoint experiments are beneficial for internal validity as they allow researchers to identify and nonparametrically estimate the causal effects of multiple components simultaneously (Hainmueller, 2014). In Hainmueller's experiment, which mimicked real-world elections, respondents were presented with candidate profiles and asked to assess their electability. These profiles varied based on seven attributes: social media interactions, age, contacts, experience, educational attainment, influencer status, and party affiliation. Each attribute could have different values, randomly chosen to create a candidate profile. Due to these limitations, the internal validity of my findings applies only to the sample I studied and cannot be generalized to all first-time voters. However, my study provides initial insights into how first-time voters prefer to choose candidates.

In this regard, it is also important to note that I did not place my experiment in the context of a specific election happening in the real world, as I am aware there are many things I may not be able to predict in this study. At the very least, it is useful to gauge respondents' preferences for politicians' attributes without inadvertently encouraging them to associate the hypothetical politicians presented in my experiment with actual politicians.

3.3 Random Assignment

My sample of respondents consists of 789 high school students. This number was chosen after going through conjoint assumptions with a minimum sample of 300. I randomly assigned respondents to one of 10 groups: each of them received 20 profiles facing each other or 10 questions containing paired candidates. Each group had a different randomization pattern to obtain variation.

3.4 Randomized Attributes and Levels

Every fictitious politician profile exhibits seven characteristics. To prevent potential order effects, the qualities were arranged in random order for every respondent. However, there was a workaround for the order effects issue that was applicable in numerous contexts. Counterbalancing entails testing various people in varying sequences. The study used counterbalancing to ensure that a comparable or equal number of participants fulfill each potential order of conditions. Each profile also has "Levels," or certain traits, awarded to it at random. We can infer causal relationships about the characteristics that matter more to respondents when selecting politicians, as well as the extent to which those characteristics are viewed more favorably or unfavorably, by using attribute randomization. My design specifically adopted the methodology of Hainmueller, Hopkins, and Yamamoto (2014), whose non-parametric, fully randomized conjoint experiment determined the AMCE on the profile

selection probability for each attribute level. AMCE is the anticipated shift in a candidate's profile rating based on a comparison between an attribute's value and the baseline value selected by the researcher.

CHAPTER IV

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Main Results

The results of the conjoint experiment of interest, candidate selection, are reported in Figure 1, which shows AMCE estimates of the probability of being selected. There are several values in each attribute that have a significant influence on the reference category (education, party, status, age, and direct contact), both positive and negative influences, but there are also those that do not have sufficient values to get a significant predicate (Billboard, Reply, FYP).

The advantage of a conjoint experiment is that everything is simultaneously compared against its own baseline. The baseline value set to zero makes the interpretation of analysis results easier and more intuitive. Each AMCE value for another attribute level can be interpreted as a change in preferences relative to the baseline. Positive values indicate greater preferences than the baseline, while negative values indicate smaller preferences. As a note and punctuation, in a conjoint experiment, each variable is compared to the baseline rather than comparing the relative strength between variables.

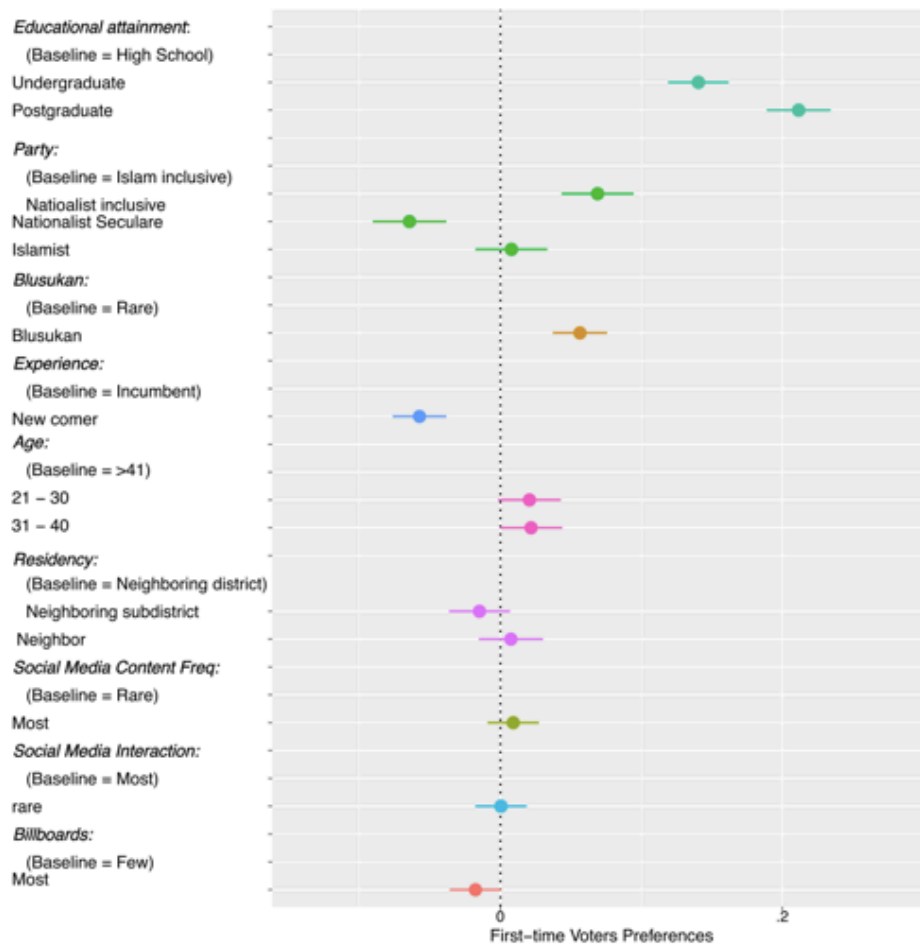


Table 2 AMCE Result

	Estimate	Std. Err	Pr(> z)	Sig
Level of Education Base: High School	0	NA		
Undergraduate	0.140	0.010	1.377158e-37	***
Postgraduate	0.211	0.011	7.016389e-75	***
Party Base: Islam Inclusive	0	NA		
Nationalist inclusive	0.061	0.013	0.0000030420	***
Islamist	0.007	0.012	0.5436582	
Nationalist Secular	-0.072	0.013	0.000000157013	***
Residency Base: Next subdistrict	0			
Neighbor	0.022	0.011	0.048567	*
Next district	0.014	0.011	0.1775	
Experience Base: Incumbent	0	NA		
New comer	-0.057	0.009	0.00000000394	***
Age Base: >41	0	NA		
Age: 31 - 40	0.021	0.012	0.0466714	*
Age: 21 - 30	0.020	0.012	0.0385673	*
Blusukan Base: Rare	0	NA		
Blusukan	0.056	0.009	0.00000000864	***
Billboard Base: rare	0	NA		
Billboard: Most frequent	-0.017	0.009	0.05729	
Social media frequently Appearance Base: Rare	0	NA		
Most Frequently appear	0.009	0.009	0.328667	
Social media interaction Base: Most interacted	0	NA		
Rare	0.0004	0.009	0.9604007000	

Level of Education

The education value, which exclusively indicates educational competence, has a significant effect at all levels. Education gets 0.140 points at the undergrad level and 0.211 at the postgraduate level, which means that when compared with the undergraduate level, which is the baseline, higher levels of education are significantly more preferred, and lower levels of education are less preferred by first-time voters. This result shows that there is a strong indication that education can be a significant influence in making differences between candidates. This means that candidates who have a higher level of education are more likely to be chosen by first-time voters than candidates who have a lower level of education. This figure is also a statistically significant figure, which means that the result is valid.

A closer look at the results shows that, when directly looking at two candidates, first-time voters value certain skills more than others. The impact of a candidate's education is significant, especially higher levels of education such as a master's degree. Academic excellence and certifications are also considered valuable. This indicates that education can provide sufficient capital in the political profession, giving candidates greater chances of being elected as they are perceived to be able to solve more complex problems using their education. This is a common perception among first-time voters who do not have enough information or experience on which to base their vote. The results mean that candidates with higher levels of education have a greater chance of being elected.

Residency

Residency is a significant estimator (having a p-value <0.05). Survey results indicate that first-time voters prefer candidates who live near their area; they do not seem to prefer candidates who live further away. This is proven by the value designated to candidates who are considered neighbors (0.022) and those living in other sub-districts (0.014). This means that the further a candidate lives from voters, the less likely they are to be chosen by first-time voters. This means that first-time voters are more likely to choose candidates who live close to them.

Age

Examining a candidate's age as one of their personal attributes, I obtained a statistically significant value (p-value < 0.05) that helps explain voter preferences. When compared to candidates aged 41 years and over, younger candidates are given priority. This is reflected in the scores of candidates aged 31-40, who received a score of 0.020, and the youngest candidates (21-30) who received a score of 0.021. Although the difference in scores between levels is not substantial, the distinction between young and old candidates is sufficient to describe the ideal age of candidates according to first-time voters. These results indicate that younger candidates are more likely to be elected than their older counterparts.

Experience

Work experience receives significant attention with a p-value < 0.01 and a -0.057-point estimate for newcomer candidates. This means that candidates who lack experience in government or a clear track record in their work are rated negatively compared to experienced candidates. This reflects first-time voters' preference for incumbent candidates or those with proven experience. The negative score for newcomers suggests that first-time voters value prior experience and expertise in governance when making their electoral decisions.

'Blusukan'

Direct contact between candidates and voters in Indonesia is better known as *blusukan*. *Blusukan* received significant points with a p-value <0.01 of 0.056 points for candidates who came out directly to greet the public. This means voters tend to choose candidates they usually meet in person. This is different from whether or not the candidate often appears on social media. This result means a candidate engaging in *blusukan* is more likely to be elected than those who don't.

Billboards

Meanwhile, roadside billboards received negative assessments from first-time voters. Candidates received a score of -0.017 for putting up a lot of billboard banners on the side of the road. Indeed, advertising regulations are not strict during the campaign season in Indonesia. There may be regulations regarding the installation of billboards, but candidates don't seem to pay attention to them, so they place them anywhere. With these results, it seems that first-time voters tend not to like the large number of billboard banners on the side of the road. However, the banner variable did not get a statistically significant number with a $p\text{-value} > 0.05$. This result means a candidate using a large number of billboards as part of their campaign is not more likely to be elected than those with fewer billboards.

Replies

Lastly, the reply or live variable on social media accounts receives less attention from first-time voters. The means of communicating directly on social media does not seem to be important for candidates. This is proven by the acquisition of 0.00046 points, a significance of >0.05 . This means a candidate receiving a lot of replies and comments on their social media content is not more likely to be elected.

Viral Content

My main concern here was the importance of candidates' social media behavior on voter decisions. The results show that, although candidate behavior on social media does not appear to have much influence on respondents' considerations compared to other candidate attributes. This means that holding all else constant, my respondents are more likely to vote for an FYP candidate than a non-FYP candidate. Compared to non-FYP candidates, FYP candidates have a higher chance of winning respondents' support by 0.009 points (SE = 0.008). Even though it is not explained significantly, the virality of FYP applies on TikTok, the virality of a Tweet in the message is implied in the FYP points being obtained, which is higher than non-FYP. However, the results show that a candidate with a lot of viral social media content is more likely to be elected.

Party Values

Party values that distinguish political affiliations have significant effects at various levels. The Democrat Party, classified as a nationalist inclusive party, received the highest score of 0.061. The Islamist Party PKB, considered Islamic inclusive, serves as the baseline, while another Islamist Party, the PKS, scores 0.007 points. In contrast, the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP) received -0.072 points. Statistical analysis shows that Nationalist Inclusive and Nationalist Secular parties have a $p\text{-value} < 0.01$, indicating high significance in predicting voter behavior. These results demonstrate that a candidate's party affiliation significantly influences their chances of being elected.

This indicates that parties can be a significant influence in making differences between candidates. The results show that, when considering two candidates, first-time voters also value

certain parties more than other parties. The gap between the values of the Democratic Party and PDI-P is not that wide, not as wide as education, but these results indicate that first-time voters take the party into account after considering education.

The findings regarding the preferences of first-time voters provide clear evidence supporting four main hypotheses, but not all variables. These studies show that education, party, personality, loyalty to the regime, and political connections all play important roles in determining potential first-time voters.

To compare what first-time voters see between variables, I conducted a logit regression to find out what might guide first-time voters in voting.

Table 3 Logistic Regression Result

	Estimate	Std. Error	z value	Pr(> z)	sig
(Intercept)	0.36552	0.07009	5.215	0.0000001838870	***
Level of Education					
Base: Undergraduate					
Postgraduate	0.28134	0.04447	6.326	0.0000000002516	***
High school	-0.58632	0.04464	-13.136	< 0.0000000000000002	***
Party					
Base: Islamist					
Nationalist Secular	-0.31684	0.05153	-6.149	0.0000000007822	***
Islam Inclusive	-0.05807	0.05166	-1.124	1,811805556	
Nationalist Inclusive	0.24308	0.05166	4.706	0.0000025291123	***
Residency					
Base: Next Home					
Next subdistrict	-0.09160	0.04489	-2.041	0,286805556	*
Next district	-0.02418	0.04443	-0.544	4,070833333	
Experience					
Base: Incumbent					
New comer	-0.24699	0.03651	-6.764	0.0000000000134	***
Age					
Base: >41					
Age: 31 - 40	0.09583	0.04483	2.137	0,226388889	*
Age: 21 - 30	0.09798	0.04482	2.186	0,2	*
Blusukan					
Base: <i>Most</i>					
<i>Non-blusukan</i>	-0.23868	0.03654	-6.532	0.0000000000649	***
Billboard					
Base: rare					

Billboard: Most Frequent	-0.07046	0.03652	-1.930	0,372916667
Social Media Frequently Appearance				
Base: rare				
Most Frequently appear	0.03913	0.03651	1.072	1,970833333
Social media interaction				
Base: rare				
Most interacted	-0.00215	0.03651	-0.059	6,618055556

Based on the results, the factors that significantly influence the predicted results are education level, party affiliation, experience, age, and frequency of *blusukan*. In contrast, variables such as Islam-inclusive, living in the area, frequency of appearances on social media, and interactions on social media do not show a significant influence.

Higher levels of education (postgraduate) increase candidate preferences by 0.28 points, while lower levels (high school) decrease preferences by 0.58 points. The Secular Nationalist Party and the Inclusive Nationalist Party significantly influence predicted results, with effects of -0.31 and 0.24 points respectively. Candidates residing in the same subdistrict as voters have a significant negative effect of -0.09 points. New candidates (newcomers) are significantly less preferred (-0.24 points) compared to incumbents. Younger candidates aged 21-30 and 31-40 are more preferred (0.97 and 0.095 points respectively) than those over 41. Not conducting "blusukan" (impromptu visits) significantly reduces preference by 0.23 points. More frequent use of billboards has a slight negative effect (-0.07 points), though not statistically significant. Appearing on social media's "For You Page" (FYP) has a small positive effect (0.03 points), while social media interaction has a negligible negative effect (-0.002 points), both not statistically significant.

The results from AMCE and logistic regression are similar, with minimal differences in their numerical outcomes, despite using different analytical approaches. AMCE compares levels within a single variable, while logistic regression considers all variables simultaneously to predict a binary decision between voting and not voting.

4.2 Discussion

4.2.1 *First-time voters prefer candidates with higher levels of education*

How do first-time voters make their vote? The habits of first-time voters who lack experience or access to information are as follows. First, they don't have enough information because they have never voted before. Elections are their first opportunity to vote, so they don't have any prior experience in turning information into action on the ballot.

Secondly, the diverse flow of information makes it challenging for first-time voters to make informed choices. Their attention is divided, especially when faced with five ballot papers in the voting booth. The complexity of the political system often exceeds the information they receive. With only 5-7 minutes in the ballot box, voters should ideally have a definite choice

in mind. However, remembering five choices simultaneously is not an easy task, particularly for those new to the voting process.

Third, this is a correction to the awareness campaign carried out by the General Elections Commission (KPU). This campaign may not achieve significant results considering its small scale when compared to the large number of voters spread across Indonesia. So far, the KPU has only disseminated information regarding the election date, types of ballot papers, permanent voter list, permanent candidate list, and election management. Apart from that, the KPU called for voting rights to be used on election day. This means that the KPU does not provide advice on how to select the candidates of their choice.

It appears that my findings in this study are not new to the study of voting behavior. The candidate's level of education is the first thing that first-time voters look at. This can be seen from my findings on the significance of candidates' educational backgrounds in the selection process. My findings strengthen the previous argument that first-time voters who have limited information choose candidates according to how educated they are.

The next reason is that educational background is the most comparable variable between candidates (Sirait et al, 2022). New voters can compare who is more educated with the ideal assumption that candidates who have a higher education are more capable than candidates who have a lower level of education.

4.2.2 Political Parties as Cues for First-time Voters

How do first-time voters differentiate between candidates with higher education? Education level is an important factor, but party affiliation is the second variable considered by first-time voters. Political parties provide substantial information to support voters' decision-making processes. Each party has distinct information, values, teachings, and ideologies that set them apart from one another. I argue that party affiliation provides both a strong distinction between candidates and a strong cue for voters.

This differentiation forms organically because first-time voters, who may lack formal education in political science, tend to use party affiliation as a primary method to distinguish between candidates (after considering education levels). The mechanism is as follows: New voters utilize the information readily available to them, which often comes from various sources including media, social networks, and party campaigns. Even a party with a relatively weak brand identity can provide valuable information to first-time voters, helping them make their electoral decisions. Political parties serve as a heuristic tool for first-time voters, offering a shortcut to understanding a candidate's potential policies and values. This is particularly useful when voters are faced with multiple candidates who have similar educational backgrounds. The party's history, public image, and stated platform all contribute to the voter's perception of the candidate, allowing for differentiation even among highly educated contenders.

As Banducci, et al (2008) said, citizens can make reasonable decisions without receiving complete information by relying on cues provided by the candidate's party affiliation, elite support, candidate eligibility, incumbent status, and candidate appearance.

For example, Popkin (1991) argues that the use of such heuristics leads to "low rationality of information" (for a contrary view, see Bartels, 1996). This type of shortcut or heuristic is especially prominent in elections with low information (McDermott, 1997) and when the situation facing voters is complex (Lau & Redlawsk, 2001 in Banducci et, al 2008). Regarding the use of heuristics in voting decisions, Lau and Redlawsk (2001 in Banducci 2008) wrote, "Party labels have become a common part of ballot papers in various types of elections."

This also means that the party is seen as a cue that provides bits of information that become shortcuts in turn. If so far, party cues have been identified with how parties provide clear or vague directions to choose or not choose one of the options, this research suggests that political parties provide cues that influence the way people vote in referendums.

Perhaps this is a cue given by Eagly and Chaiken (1993). These are data points that permit inferences to be drawn without the need for in-depth knowledge or challenging cognitive processes (Eagly and Chaiken, 1993; Rucker and Petty, 2006 in Bullock, 2019). While there are many different types of signals in politics, such as endorsements of certain candidates and interest groups, party cues are the most accessible and trustworthy to voters (Downs, 1957). Members of the public use their own party identification and party cues to effectively shape policy preferences on complex issues in the US, where most voters identify as Democrats or Republicans (Zaller, 1992; Green et al., 2002; Cohen, 2003; Kam, 2005; Bullock, 2011; Sniderman and Stiglitz, 2012). To give one example, Kam (2005) manipulated party issue stances in newspaper articles about food irradiation in order to investigate the impact of party cues on policy choices. The findings demonstrated that when party identifiers learned that their own party was in favor of food irradiation, they endorsed it more firmly. This implies that party identifiers make use of party cues to formulate policy preferences that align with the stances of their respective parties. To put it briefly, party cues allow voters who lack sufficient policy knowledge to develop "ostensibly rational" policy choices.

According to Downs (1957) and Popkin (1994) in Bullock (2019), cues are "cognitive shortcuts" that allow people to make decisions more quickly and easily. This is one of the core theories of political psychology. Party cues can save people time and effort in two ways, according to Bullock: Either they minimize the amount of thought that goes into the information at hand, or they prompt people to look for further information that is pertinent to their decision-making more quickly. This indicates that parties offer data that novice voters utilize. First-time voters appear to base their decision on these obvious differences between the parties.

To reaffirm that first-time voters fall under the category of low-information voters due to their propensity to draw on heuristic information processing, I rely on passive heuristic processing, which uses straightforward decision principles as opposed to assessing the content of policies.

According to dual-process theories, heuristic processing occurs more frequently when people are not motivated or able to carefully consider the signals they are given (Bullock, 2019). Because dual-process theories imply that cues allow people to become confident in their opinions with little effort, it is further evidence that first-time voters, who are typically high school students, are not adequately informed about the voting process (Petty and Cacioppo 1986 I Bullock 2019). These findings further reaffirm the validity of political parties as the primary determinant of first-time voters' decisions. Party cues will matter even more when parties have clear reputations, when the parties are older, or when the number of parties competing against each other is small (Bullock, 2019).

Furthermore, whether party cues "dominate" policy information in people's judgments, whether they are "shortcuts", and how they affect the inferences about policies, exposure to cues that associate a politician with a party makes party members more supportive of the politician (e.g., Arceneaux 2008; Kirkland and Coppock 2018; Schaffner, Streb, and Wright 200 in Bullock, 2019). Redlawsk and Lau (2006, esp. 137) In order to support my research findings, I used an experiment to support my claim that party-cue effects are greater in elections with more candidates since, all else being equal, this causes the candidates to become less different from one another.

Bullock (2019) questioned the arguments about party choice and the rationality of policy choices, suggesting that party cues don't necessarily reduce attention to other information when people already possess that information. However, this doesn't negate the argument that parties provide valuable information to differentiate between candidates. This information serves as a reference point for decision-making, even for first-time voters with minimal political education. Ezrow's study of mainstream parties demonstrates that parties closer to the mean voter position obtain a higher proportion of votes in national elections compared to parties further from this position.

Why do centrist parties tend to perform better? This can be explained by the theory of median voters and mainstream parties, which posits that mainstream parties receive incentives in a multi-party system. The *ceteris paribus* theory suggests that policy centrism leads to electoral success, a phenomenon clearly observable in multi-party systems.

Ezrow's research investigated the relationship between party positions, voter preferences, and election outcomes in Western European multiparty systems. His study focuses on the role of policy centrism and its impact on party success in elections. Ezrow emphasizes the importance of parties' proximity to the average voter's position, noting that parties closer to the center of the policy space tend to receive electoral benefits, although to a lesser extent than non-centrist parties.

Ezrow argues that a party's closeness to the average voter's position correlates with popular support. Parties receive statistically significant electoral gains when they are perceived to be close to the average voter's position.

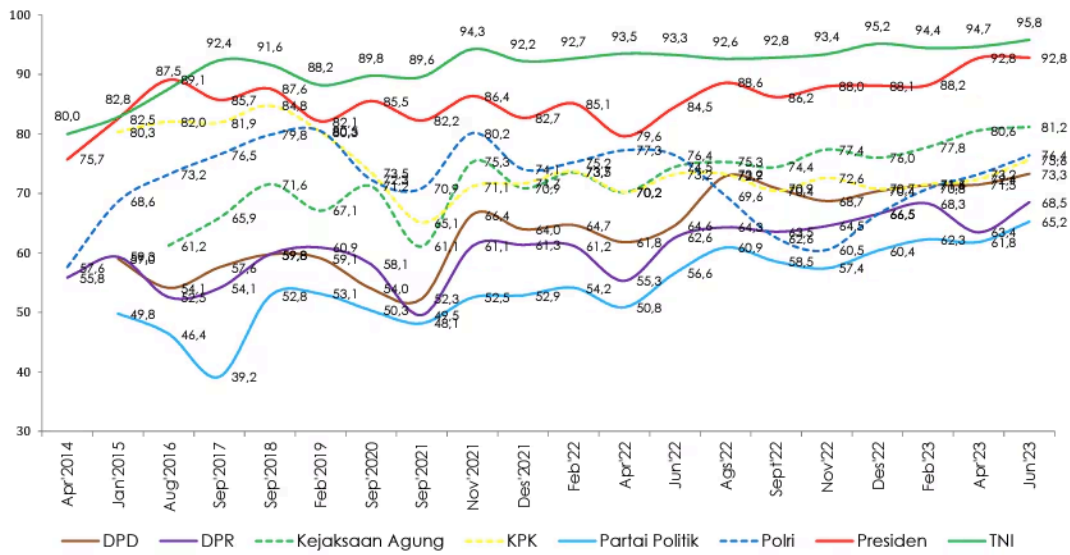
This study's findings support the moderating effect of elections. The argument is straightforward: society is divided due to differences (race, ethnicity, ideology, social class). Even seemingly homogeneous societies have inherent fragmentation. These cleavages are persistent, but electoral engineering and the election and party system can help manage them. Elections offer a top-down solution, while a healthy party system can reduce horizontal conflicts in society.

The history of party formation is closely tied to social cleavages, such as religious divisions forming parties based on established values (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967). The party and electoral systems officially accommodate these conflicting values. These systems help reduce divisions and horizontal conflicts in society, essentially institutionalizing these divisions.

According to rational choice theory, there's a strong relationship between median voters and moderation, even in multiparty systems (Norris, 2004). The Proportional Representation (PR) system is suitable for divided societies (Lijphart, 2006). These theories suggest that certain basic needs in a state system cannot be postponed, such as issues close to young people. These issues will naturally rise to prominence. Basic issues of common interest will always be central, like how median voters are always within two standard deviations, representing around 60 percent of the vote. In simpler terms, if society is divided into several irreconcilable interests, each societal entity will seek its most likely channels, and those with centrist ideologies will typically receive the most votes.

Another element as a moderating effect is the emergence of the catch-all party phenomenon, where catch-all parties have unclear ideologies and platforms. As a result of fulfilling representation in order to qualify to become members of parliament, parties ignore ideological approaches and choose to participate in mainstream issues as long as they can lead to victory in parliament. This case is interesting, where PR is the system that has the greatest opportunity for representation, instead of providing an ideological gap for voters, it has a moderating effect until the ideology fades.

TREN KEPERCAYAAN TERHADAP LEMBAGA



INDIKATOR

Source: Indikator

However, these findings become interesting when compared with the results of a national survey conducted before the election. It shows that when it comes to trust in political institutions places, political parties land at the bottom of every survey. This conflicts with the findings of my research. My findings demonstrate that parties are a significant variable for first-time voters in choosing their candidates, yet at the same time, parties are the least trusted among political institutions.

I call this phenomenon a "love-hate relationship" between parties and young people. On the one hand, voters have low trust in political parties, but at the same time, they need political parties to differentiate between candidates. From these differences, voters determine their political choices.

4.2.3 Age and Residency

Why are age and residence important factors for first-time voters in choosing a candidate? Our results show that first-time voters prefer younger candidates and candidates who live close to them. Both results are statistically significant.

The claim that candidates' younger age is an advantage is supported by several research. First, voters in McClean and Yono's experiment thought younger politicians were equally as good as middle-aged candidates, but they dislike older candidates the most (Ono, Y., and C. McClean 2020). According to McClean and Ono's reasoning, people can assume that older politicians will concentrate on problems that are less significant to many younger or middle-aged voters, or that they simply lack the energy to focus on issues in general. Second, voters can assume that older people are less capable of being politicians and have fewer desirable attributes. The third possibility is that older individuals are thought to be less physically attractive (Todorov

et al. 2005 in Mclean and Ono, 2020), which is not necessarily connected to statistical discrimination.

Sevi (2021) has also investigated the theory that a leader has greater popularity and is therefore more likely to be elected by voters who are younger than them. Second, even though the impacts were negligible, Sevi discovered some evidence in favor of both theories. Voters are more likely to support candidates who represent their sociodemographic background, which explains why they favor candidates who are similar in age. In the meantime, young people are underrepresented in all world parliaments, claims Sevi (2021). Furthermore, young voters frequently have different policy preferences than older voters, just like other minorities.

Regarding candidates who live closer to voters, it is certainly an advantage for voters to be more accessible to candidates. The results of this study show that candidates who live closer are more likely to be elected than candidates who live further away, for example, in another city or district. From these results, it can be learned that novice voters can distinguish between candidates who live close by and further away. The meaning of far and near may be a crystallization of the principle of accessibility. Candidates who live closer tend to be considered more familiar and can be communicated with than distant candidates; the logical consequence of near and far is to know and not know.

The results of this study align with those of Campbell and Cowley (2014), who found in their experimental scenario that a candidate's place of residence continues to have a significant impact on candidate evaluation. This research also considers the explanation provided by Arzheimer and Evans (2012), who discovered that the distance between voters and candidates from the three main parties (Conservatives, Labour, and Liberal Democrats) matters in UK constituencies, even when controlling for strong predictors of vote choice.

A compelling reason for this is that a candidate who is closer to the voter is more likely to be known personally by the voter, can be expected to share the voter's local concerns, and will resonate with them. Johnston (1974), as cited in Arzheimer (2012), supports these last two arguments, stating: "Candidates win voter support because a local representative is considered desirable, regardless of their party. They are expected to fight for local causes, and voters take pride in their local representative, hoping for reflected glory. This effect occurs even without widespread personal contact between the candidate and voters, due to the candidate's limited reach."

Voters, therefore, tend to seek candidates who live near their homes, and those surveyed are expected to be more likely to support local candidates (Górecki, M.A., & Marsh, M. 2012). In his study, Górecki explains that Putnam's investigation of the mechanisms behind the apparent impact of local context on voter behavior has an important counterpart in electoral geography in the study of the "neighborhood effect". It is argued that personal contact and social interaction are the core mechanisms behind this effect and that it derives more deeply from personal contact. But its relative influence is of course influenced by other contextual factors, including the electoral system and wider political culture. However, even without me asking respondents why they voted for the candidate who lived closer to them, the results of this study

support the argument that voters will vote for candidates who are closer to them in terms of residence than those who are further away.

I tried to find a common thread between these arguments. The most likely is that what first-time voters want is political access for them, with the age and home proximity of first-time voters, it will be easier for first-time voters to express their aspirations.

But if proximity and age are important to first-time voters, why did the 2024 election produce the fewest young House members since 1999? Only 15 percent (87 people) of the elected members of the House of Representatives were under the age of 40 in the 2024 election. Does this mean that the findings of this study are invalid?

For this argument, it is important to compare young candidates who rarely meet voters — in this context, rarely engage in *blusukan* — and older candidates who often engage in *blusukan*. Our results provide an estimator that can answer this question because, on a point basis, the gap between *blusukan* and age as factors is quite wide, 0.09 for younger candidates and 0.23 for candidates who often do *blusukan*. This means that going out into the community has significantly more impact than the candidate's age.

Another alternative explanation for this phenomenon is that perhaps the logistics of younger candidates are some of the reasons why the results of my study are not the same as the results of the 2024 election when this study took place. An alternative explanation was offered by the chairman of the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR), Bambang Soesatyo, who attributed the failure of younger candidates to gain a seat in the House to a lack of greater political capital.

However, this explanation is not supported by this study, as logistical and financial variables cannot be seen directly by voters. Generally, novice voters cannot discern directly how much wealth a candidate must convince voters to vote for him. However, it is actually the logistical mechanisms during the campaign period or daily campaigns that require a more detailed explanation, for example how they are distributed. It is a bit strange not to include control variables such as the candidate's wealth. However, explanations of these variables are not common in the study of first-time voters in political science.

4.2.4 Blusukan: Why is it considered important by young people?

The results of this study show that *blusukan*, age, and place of residence are significant factors in a candidate's electability. *Blusukan* is a new term that emerged after the 2012 election. Previously, the phrase *blusukan* was rarely known by most voters in Indonesia. *Blusukan* is adopted from the Javanese phrase *blusuk*, which can be translated to “inspection visit” or “impromptu visit” (KBBI).

Blusukan is different from a recess, which requires a set of events or a period where House members work outside the DPR building, meeting constituents in their respective electoral districts through work visits.

Working visits, also known as recess activities, are an important part of the political process in Indonesia. These visits are conducted by members of the House of Representatives (DPR) or Regional People's Representative Council (DPR-D) to their electoral districts. The purpose of these visits is twofold: To absorb and accommodate the aspirations of the people who elected them and to allow the government and DPR-D to gather input from the community

These visits can be carried out individually or in groups. All DPR/DPR-D members are required to visit their electoral districts to maintain a connection with their constituents. This practice ensures that elected officials stay in touch with the needs and concerns of the people they represent, allowing for a more responsive and accountable political system.

Compared to recess, *blusukan* is more private, informal, sporadic, unescorted, and spontaneous. *Blusukan* does not require a large budget like recess activities. Recess requires inviting and gathering many people in one place, while *blusukan* targets specific destinations, such as development projects, and aims to collect input from local communities regarding the problems they face.

Blusukan in this study has a significant place, namely that it has a negative estimator for candidates who never engage in *blusukan*. This means that novice voters negatively view new legislative candidates who never meet and greet their constituents in a *blusukan*. They are viewed as being indifferent to the plight of the people because they never meet them in person.

The conceptualization of *blusukan* is very close to what Neimi (2010) calls “contact”. Contact with candidates who appeal to voters will create a memory, which in turn, prompts voters to choose those candidates. Not all candidates practice *blusukan*. This research found that voters want candidates who meet with them directly. Current conditions do not reflect this; in other words, not many legislative candidates currently visit communities to connect with voters.

This study also found that first-time voters saw something extraordinary in candidates who took to the streets to meet the people. Candidates who engage with people directly are the hope of the voters, which in the current situation, can be considered rare. This is simply because voters want candidates who interact with their constituents. Voters see something that should be normal as something extraordinary.

How does this happen? To explain why candidates who rarely interact with communities are less likely to be chosen by first-time voters than those who make frequent visits, I argue that first-time voters prefer candidates who demonstrate care for them. I interpret *blusukan* (impromptu visits) as a means of building self-identity. The clear difference between recess activities and *blusukan* presents a positive impact in that it attracts attention to gain mass support.

Political communication between candidates and society, including promises made, proposed changes and improvements to society, and the vision and mission delivered, are all intended to attract people's attention and secure votes for specific candidates (Gama et al., 2020). I argue that the more personalized nature of *blusukan*, compared to alternatives such as recess activities, builds a positive image in the eyes of novice voters. Through *blusukan*, first-time voters perceive the candidate as down-to-earth, caring, willing to work, and diligent in their duties.

Blusukan is also a way for voters to directly observe the political process from the front lines, rather than a process full of cheating, under-the-table deals, and elite alliances. Generally, novice voters have limited information about the political process. They use any available information to choose from the options presented to them. Conventional wisdom suggests that the public dislikes campaigns for their negativity and superficiality, preferring a cleaner, more substantive, and deliberative process.

However, while citizens may indeed dislike campaigns, they do not necessarily desire more deliberation, debate, and discussion of issues. Instead, they want simple cues that allow them to assess candidates with minimal effort. Ultimately, the ideal campaign envisioned by the public falls somewhere between the substantive and participatory campaign envisioned by reformers and what Lipsitz calls an "undemanding campaign" (Lipsitz et al., 2005).

I argue that greater familiarity with "politics" breeds contempt, while lesser familiarity breeds complacency (Hibbing & Theiss-Morse, 2002). This reaffirms the more personalized nature of *blusukan* compared to other alternatives, making it particularly appealing to first-time voters who may have limited political knowledge but seek tangible ways to connect with candidates.

4.2.5 First-time voters are unsure about newcomers

The results of this study show that experience is a significant factor for candidate electability. The argument about newcomers states that candidates who have had previous experience in a similar position tend to be considered more qualified (Horiuchi et al, 2020). According to Horiuchi, experience as a "quality" attribute is often measured by previous position or experience in local assemblies (for example, Jacobson 1989 in Horiuchi 2020). Voters may also prefer experienced candidates because of the capabilities they bring in representing, for example, local or regional needs. In other words, voters may evaluate experience or tenure in the abstract, to the exclusion of evaluating the actual individual who is experienced. This research reveals that in the Indonesian context, previous terms in office are considered important as political experience or "quality" in general.

To ensure the experience-advantage effect, I cite the argument that any experience-advantage among the electorate is a function of short-term effects, partisanship, and electoral saliency (Desposato, 2003). The short-term effect is interpreted as a temporary advantage for candidates, considering that first-time voters are not yet familiar with the intricacies of politics. First-time voters consider experience to have what is called a direct effect, reflecting the value of resources (such as staff) attached to legislative office, and an indirect effect — the outgrowth of a scare-off effect (the ability of experience to deter high-quality challengers) and a quality effect (reflecting how much electoral advantage a party accrues when it has an experienced

rather than an inexperienced candidate) (Cox, 1996). There is an assumption that candidates who have served in office have valuable experience.

Meanwhile, Hirano and Snyder's (2009) study demonstrates that direct office-holder benefits and the experience quality advantage exist over newcomer candidates from the same party, even in multi-member systems. My study supports the overall argument about the experience effect, while Dettmann and Pepinsky (2017) identify a consistent personal experience advantage in Indonesia.

However, Dettmann and Pepinsky (2017) argue that this advantage is mediated by party choices over how experienced and newcomer candidates are ranked on party lists, a key heuristic for voters in low-information electoral environments such as Indonesia. This study supports my findings, but we differ in our reasoning about order effects because we randomized all variables to eliminate such effects. I found that even without order effects, first-time voters still tend to prefer experienced candidates.

Interestingly, first-time voters also have age preferences that are close to their own. Why do young voters tend to vote for young candidates? McClean and Ono (2024) show through experiments that voters strongly disliked older candidates but viewed younger and middle-aged candidates as equally favorable. Young voters especially liked young candidates, suggesting that greater youth turnout could increase youth representation and slightly reduce the power of experience. My study does not fully support the argument about the relationship between experience and age; however, in this study, experience has a significant impact.

In Sigelman et al's (1982) famous study on age compared to gender and race, the most impressive trend in the data was the fact that a candidate's age had a greater impact on voting behavior than a candidate's sex or race. College-aged voters studied here consistently found young candidates highly attractive and, even more noticeably, elderly candidates unattractive. This evidence of ageism is consistent not only with signs of ageism in other arenas but also with the hypothesis that similarity between voter and candidate influences attraction. It is more difficult, however, to account for the relative potency of ageism over sexism and racism in the data.

Additionally, this study supports experiments conducted by Shen and Soda (2021) on candidate age preferences. Their findings stated that participants' intention to vote for male candidates increased with age until candidates were about 45 years old and then slightly decreased. In contrast, participants' intention to vote for female candidates consistently occurs with candidates' age. Perceived attractiveness and warmth accounted for some of the gender differences in the effect of candidates' perceived age. This means there is a great interest in looking at younger candidates.

It could be that this study supports the findings of Piliavin's (1987) significant age-similarity effect, where voters prefer those of the same age. Although we cannot conclude these findings, first-time voters seem to choose younger candidates.

4.2.6 Do first-time voters pay attention to a candidate's campaign strategy?

The results of this study show that billboards, viral content, and online engagement are not a factor that supports the success of candidates. On the contrary, employing a large number of billboards is a factor that reduces the electability of candidates. However, my research findings are the first to compare the effects of social media campaigns with other variables such as personal attributes and the impact of non-social media campaigns. The finding that social media is not significant in candidate selection requires an explanation, because in my hypothesis, I described that social media is very close to first-time voters.

One interesting finding of my research is that first-time voters don't care about campaign strategies. With insignificant results, the campaign variables, both social media and direct campaigns, were not as important as the personal and party attributes of the candidate. The online campaign method (via FYP on TikTok, reels on Instagram, and Tweets on X) does not bear significant value. The content produced by candidates did get a positive estimator value, which means voters paid attention to the candidate's content, but this figure was not statistically significant. This suggests that a candidate's social media content influences voters' decisions but is not significant. This is in contrast to the argument which states that campaigns via social media are an effective variable (Gherghina, 2021).

The concept of social media content in this context refers to its deliberate use for political campaigns, similar to billboards installed along roadsides. Social media's superficial supervisory nature, combined with voters' minimal political education and undemanding nature, results in content on social media's For You Page (FYP) having an insignificant impact, while interactive behavior on social media has a negligible negative effect.

Firstly, voters in this election are considered "undemanding." Those who access more information on social media tend to be distracted by political content. The study's findings suggest that social media interactions (replies) had a slight negative impact, albeit not statistically significant. This aligns with the negative impact of roadside billboards - the more billboards, the more they may disturb new voters. For instance, uncontrolled circulation can lead to information overflow on social media. The role of expert "opinion leaders" is crucial in communication processes characterized by noisy, biased information, where people with varying levels of expertise and preferences select and are influenced by informants.

The concept of overflow here relates to voters' limited ability to process information on social media due to their low digital political literacy, stemming from a lack of direct political experience. Secondly, this research indicates that social media is not a primary source of political information or a significant reference point for voters. The purported significant effect of social media, as promoted by many scholars, appears less impactful when considered alongside other variables. Any positive effect of social media content creation is minimal. The importance of direct contact through *blusukan* (impromptu visits) emerges as a more significant variable, representing candidates' tangible presence to voters.

There seems to be an "out of sight, out of mind" effect when comparing the significant impact of *blusukan* to the lesser impact of social media. New voters in this study tended to confirm

that candidates who aren't visibly active are less likely to be considered. In other words, if candidates cannot establish direct contact with first-time voters, they may not be perceived as present or relevant.

CHAPTER V CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

5.1 Summary of Findings

This study explored how first-time voters choose legislative candidates in Indonesia's general elections. What characteristics do first-time voters prefer in a legislative candidate? To address this research objective, four primary hypotheses were identified to guide the investigation:

The preferences of first-time voters are significantly influenced by several key factors. Candidates with a higher level of education, such as an undergraduate or postgraduate degree, are highly favored, which is a preference of first-time voters who place importance on the candidate's level of education in distinguishing between candidates. Party affiliation is another important factor, indicating that first-time voters get cues from parties to distinguish the preferred candidate from other candidates.

The candidate's experience is also highly valued, as incumbent candidates are preferred over newcomers. Direct engagement with voters, known as *blusukan*, significantly increases a candidate's chances of being elected. A candidate's place of residence plays an important role, with voters preferring candidates who live closer to them. A candidate's age is also important, with younger candidates being slightly more favorable. Meanwhile, traditional campaign methods such as billboards have a negative impact, and social media presence is not very significant. Overall, education, party identity, direct contact with voters (*blusukan*), experience, and age were the most significant factors influencing the preferences of first-time voters.

To provide a comprehensive study of this phenomenon, I carried out a systematic review of existing literature. The insights gained from this study will make a significant contribution to a greater understanding of how first-time voters vote by highlighting the characteristics of legislative candidates that first-time voters look for. These findings have significant implications for future research on the political behavior of first-time voters. They also contribute to a broader theoretical and empirical understanding regarding the effectiveness of voter political education and campaign strategies for political parties.

The results of this research show that a candidate's level of education is the first variable considered by first-time voters. Other factors that are significant in influencing the first-time voter's decision, identity of party, residency, experience status, age, and *blusukan*. In contrast, the number of billboards, frequency of appearances on social media, and interactions on social media do not show a significant influence.

5.2 Implication of The Study

Researchers should continue to explore how first-time voters choose candidates. This can contribute to a better understanding of the complex dynamics that influence their political choices so that parties can understand what voters really want. This research does not sufficiently describe first-time voters as a whole. Future research could be expanded to what factors shape these choices from the voter's personal perspective. For example, to answer why

social media does not have a significant impact on first-time voters' decisions, research could be conducted on voter behavior on social media and their political choices.

It's important to acknowledge the limitations of this study. The research used a non-probability sampling technique, which means the results are only valid for this specific study and cannot be generalized to all first-time voters. To expand on this research in the future, we could use probability sampling techniques (e.g., multistage random sampling) to allow for broader generalizations. Additionally, conducting comparative studies would be valuable. For instance, we could compare new voters in rural and urban areas to identify any distinct patterns or compare voters from public schools and private religious schools to understand potential daily mobilization or political influences in schools. These suggested studies would be valuable in identifying various approaches to understanding and engaging first-time voters. By pursuing these research directions, we can gain a more comprehensive understanding of the diverse factors influencing first-time voters' decision-making processes across different contexts.

In conclusion, my research has highlighted the fact that first-time voters still look at political parties as a differentiator between candidates. Politicians and policy practitioners can create more successful strategies for understanding voter behavior and encouraging political education at various levels — even among large numbers of first-time voters — by considering the unique contexts and circumstances in which voting forms may differ with certain voting behavior.

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Artikel ini telah tayang di Kompas.com dengan judul "CSIS: Pemilu 2024 Hasilkan Anggota DPR Muda Paling Minim Sepanjang Sejarah sejak 1999", Klik untuk baca: <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2024/04/25/12250401/csis-pemilu-2024-hasilkan-anggota-dpr-muda-paling-minim-sepanjang-sejarah>.

Appendix

Variable	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	
Social Media Content Frequently Appearance	Rare	Most		
Social Media Interaction	Rare	Most interacted		
Numbers of Billboard	Rare	Most		
<i>Blusukan</i>	Rare	Most		
Age	21-30	31-40	>41	
Experience	Newcomer	Incumbent		
Educational background	High school	Bachelor's Degree	Postgraduate	
Local Residency	Next Home	Next Subdistrict	Next District	
Party type	Nationalist (PDIP)	Nationalist Islam (golkar, Demokrat)	Islam Nationalist (PAN, PKB)	Islamist (PKS)

Pertanyaan biografis:

1. Siapa nama anda/inisial
2. Usia anda?
3. Berapa lama main sosmed
 - a. 1-3 jam
 - b. 4-5 jam
 - c. 5-8 jam
 - d. Di atas 8 jam
4. Apa socmed yang favorit
 - a. Tiktok
 - b. IG
 - c. X/twitter
5. Media sosial yang paling memuat informasi politik?
 - a. Tiktok
 - b. IG
 - c. X/twitter
6. Ketika ada baner caleg di pinggir jalan, maka saya ...
 - a. meluangkan waktu untuk membaca
 - b. tidak peduli
 - c. suka foto nya
7. salah satu anggota keluarga saya adalah kader partai
 - a. benar
 - b. tidak
8. saya berasal dari keluarga yang sangat taat beragama
 - a. benar
 - b. tidak

Jika pemilu dilaksanakan hari ini, mana calon anggota DPR RI yang anda pilih ?

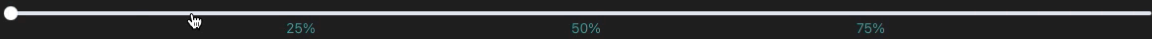
VARIABLE	CANDIDATE A	CANDIDATE B
Status Jabatan	Pendatang baru	Sudah menjabat
Banner Pinggir Jalan	Banyak	Banyak
Live Tiktok	Jarang	Jarang
Usia	31 - 40	41 ke atas
Pendidikan	SMA	SMA
FYP	Sering	Jarang
Blusukan	Jarang	Sering
Tempat Tinggal	Kecamatan sebelah	Tetangga
Partai	PKB	PKB
VARIABLE	CANDIDATE A	CANDIDATE B

- Kandidat A
- Kandidat B

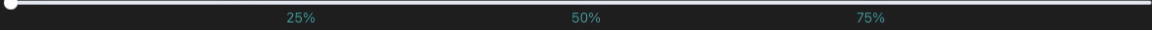
Pertanyaan 2

Seberapa yakin anda calon anggota DPR RI tersebut dapat mewakili anda di DPR RI?

Kandidat A



Kandidat B



Next

Jika pemilu dilaksanakan hari ini, mana calon anggota DPR RI yang anda pilih ?

VARIABLE	CANDIDATE A	CANDIDATE B
Usia	31 - 40	31 - 40
Live Tiktok	Sering	Sering
Status Jabatan	Sudah menjabat	Sudah menjabat
Blusukan	Jarang	Sering
Pendidikan	S1	S2/S3
Tempat Tinggal	Kecamatan sebelah	Kabupaten sebelah
FYP	Sering	Jarang
Banner Pinggir Jalan	Banyak	Sedikit
Partai	Demokrat/Gerindra/Nasdem	PKS

VARIABLE	CANDIDATE A	CANDIDATE B
----------	-------------	-------------

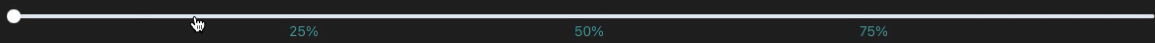
Profiling Candidate Personalized Model 7

- Kandidat A
- Kandidat B

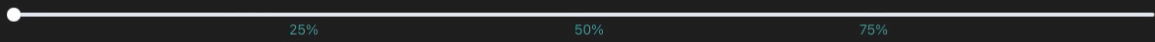
Pertanyaan 2

Seberapa yakin anda calon anggota DPR RI tersebut dapat mewakili anda di DPR RI?

Kandidat A



Kandidat B



Next

Jika pemilu dilaksanakan hari ini, mana calon anggota DPR RI yang anda pilih ?

VARIABLE	CANDIDATE A	CANDIDATE B
FYP	Jarang	Jarang
Live Tiktok	Sering	Sering
Pendidikan	S1	SMA
Partai	PKB	PDIP
Usia	41 ke atas	21 - 30
Blusukan	Sering	Sering
Status Jabatan	Sudah menjabat	Pendatang baru
Banner Pinggir Jalan	Banyak	Banyak
Tempat Tinggal	Tetangga	Tetangga

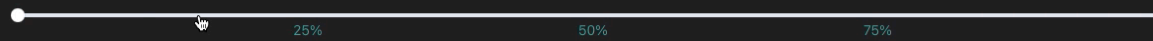
VARIABLE	CANDIDATE A	CANDIDATE B
----------	-------------	-------------

- Kandidat A
- Kandidat B

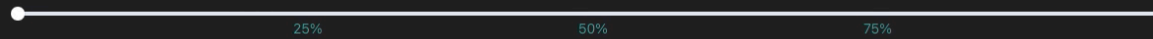
Pertanyaan 2

Seberapa yakin anda calon anggota DPR RI tersebut dapat mewakili anda di DPR RI?

Kandidat A



Kandidat B



Next

Report of Diagnostic Test

A. Carryover effect

Attribute	p
-----	-----
Party	0.0267
Age	0.1029
Educational Attainment	0.1609
Residency	0.5642
Experience	0.6785
Social Media Content Frequently Appearance	0.0523
Social Media Interaction	0.7567
Numbers of Billboard	0.3665
Blusukan	0.6188

Overall, the "Party" attribute shows a significant carryover effect ($p < 0.05$), while the other attributes do not show a significant carryover effect because their p-value is greater than 0.05.

B. Profile order

Attribute	p
-----	-----
Party	0.5361
Age	0.5553
Educational Attainment	0.0888
Residency	0.7228
Experience	0.1211
Social Media Content Frequently Appearance	0.2804
Social Media Interaction	0.1984
Numbers of Billboard	0.4933
Blusukan	1.0000

Overall, none of the attributes showed a significant profile order effect because all p-values were greater than 0.05.

C. Randomization

Attribute	p
-----	-----
Party	0.689
Age	NA
Educational Attainment	0.917
Residency	0.894
Experience	0.763
Social Media Content Frequently Appearance	0.178
Social Media Interaction	0.418
Numbers of Billboard	0.857
Blusukan	0.918
