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Dyah Permana Erawaty
University of Indonesia, seciliamt1@gmail.com

Umami Salamah
University of Indonesia, ummisalamah15@ui.ac.id

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A Socio-Psychological Model of Urban Millennial Postgraduate Students' Votes: Swing Voters of Indonesian Presidential Elections

DYAH PERMANA ERAWATY*

Department of Communication Studies, University of Indonesia
Jl. Salemba Raya No. 4, Jakarta Pusat, 10430, Indonesia
Email: seciliamt1@gmail.com

UMMI SALAMAH**

Department of Communication Studies, University of Indonesia
Jl. Salemba Raya No. 4, Jakarta Pusat, 10430, Indonesia
Email: ummisalamah15@ui.ac.id

ABSTRAK

Pemilihan presiden 2019 menunjukkan banyak peralihan pilihan terhadap para kandidat yang bertarung untuk kedua kalinya. Studi ini berusaha memahami penyebab di balik keputusan pemilih untuk beralih pilihan dan bagaimana pemilih milenial dengan latar belakang pendidikan pascasarjana menetapkan suara mereka. Studi ini menggunakan suara yang diberikan oleh mahasiswa pascasarjana milenial perkotaan sebagai unit analisisnya. Selain itu, studi ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui apakah media sosial berkontribusi terhadap keputusan untuk beralih suara. Kami menggunakan pendekatan *Columbia School* dan *Michigan School* untuk model sosio-psikologis sebagai kerangka konseptual dan memasukkan modifikasi konsep komunikasi massa sendiri, yang memasukkan komunikasi massa ke dalam komunikasi interpersonal. Penelitian ini dilakukan dengan paradigma kualitatif post-positivis dan menggunakan metode penelitian studi kasus holistik tunggal. Penelitian ini menggunakan teknik analisis logika pencocokan pola. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pemilih milenial memindahkan dukungannya pada Pilpres 2019 karena variabel sosial yaitu agama, suku, dan hubungan keluarga. Pada variabel psikologis, kami tidak menemukan peran yang dimainkan oleh identifikasi partai melainkan evaluasi kandidat, seperti kinerja incumbent dan koherensi identitas, dan orientasi masalah, khususnya tentang hak asasi manusia dan isu-isu perempuan. Kami juga menemukan bahwa proses pengambilan keputusan pemilih dipengaruhi oleh meme politik yang berperan sebagai gerbang untuk diskusi kelompok sosial lebih lanjut dan motivasi untuk mempelajari lebih lanjut tentang identitas kandidat. Selain itu, presentasi debat presiden tentang keterampilan debat kandidat berkontribusi pada keputusan pemungutan suara. Komunikasi diri secara masal, khususnya di media sosial, tidak dilakukan terkait politik karena pemilih tidak ingin afiliasi politiknya diketahui oleh pengguna internet lainnya.

Kata kunci: komunikasi diri masal, milenial, pemilihan presiden, *swing voters*

*The author is a student of Master in Communication Studies, University of Indonesia.

**The author is a lecturer in Department of Communication Studies, University of Indonesia.

ABSTRACT

The 2019 presidential election showed many swing voters between the candidates who battled for the second time. This study seeks to understand the cause behind voters' decisions to switch their voters and how millennial voters with postgraduate education backgrounds swing their votes. This study treats the votes cast by urban millennial postgraduate students as its unit of analysis. Additionally, it aims to find out whether social media has contribution to switch votes. We employed the Columbian and Michigan approach to the socio-psychological model as our conceptual framework and incorporated a modification of the concept of mass self-communication, which includes the immersion of mass communication into interpersonal communication. This study was carried out under a qualitative post-positivist paradigm and used a single holistic case study research method. This study uses pattern-matching logic analysis techniques. The results show that millennial voters swung their votes in the 2019 presidential election because of social variables, namely religion, ethnicity, and family relations. On the psychological variables, we found no role played by party identification but instead an evaluation of candidates, such as incumbent performance and identity coherence, and issue orientation, particularly about human rights and women's issues. We also found that voters' decision-making process was influenced by political memes, which played a role as a gate to further social group discussions and motivation to learn more about the candidates' identities. Additionally, presidential debates' presentation of candidates' debating skills contributed to voting decisions. Mass self-communication, particularly on social media, was not done concerning politics as voters did not want their political affiliation to be known by other internet users.

Keywords: Mass Self-communication; millennials; presidential election; swing voters

INTRODUCTION

Millennials were significant in the 2019 Indonesian presidential elections because they made up 40% of the country's eligible voters that year (Irawanto 2019). However, millennials tend to be more oriented towards their matters than public issues such as politics (Irawanto 2019). Strategies to attract millennials have tended to be limited to candidates' changes in appearance. Although these efforts are attractive to the media, they do not have long-term effects on millennial voters because they do not seem genuine (Irawanto 2019). The programs introduced in both candidates' campaigns were unclear and ineffective to gauge millennials' interest as they were too general.

Surveys have shown that although millennials were a digital generation, the presidential candidates' outreach on social media had been hampered by the significant rural-urban internet disparity. Surveys have also shown a broad trend of political apathy among millennials, as well as differences in concerns between older and younger millennials

(Irawanto 2019). It was as if the millennial generation was a phenomenon of its own. Millennials are defined as those who were born between 1980 and 2000 (Durkin 2010; Taylor and Keeter 2010; Caraher 2016; Hobbs 2017). They were digital natives with solid familiarity with the digital world, politics, and religion (Pew Research Center 2014). These digital natives are at the front when using new digital platforms—internet, cellular technology, social media—in building networks of friends, colleagues, and affinity groups (Pew Research Center 2014). Hootsuite's data as of January 2019 showed that millennials made up the largest segment of social media users (Kemp 2019). The Pew Research Center found that millennials are better educated than their previous generation. Millennials make up the largest group that had completed tertiary education at undergraduate and postgraduate levels (Pew Research Center 2019). The Indonesian Central Statistics Bureau (Biro Pusat Statistik) had predicted that in 2020, the Indonesian urban population would make up 56,7% of the entire population; this number will continue to increase as people in rural areas transition into urban societies (Purwandi 2016). The provinces with the most significant urban population had been DKI Jakarta (100%), followed by West Java (65.7%), Central Java, and East Java (Purwandi 2016).

According to KPU's data, there had been vote swings from Joko Widodo (Jokowi) to Prabowo in 2014 and 2019 and vice versa in several provinces. These provinces included Jambi, Bengkulu, South Sulawesi, Southeast Sulawesi, and Gorontalo. This finding indicates the existence of swing voters. The percentage of voters who voted for Jokowi's re-election (55.5%) was below the votes cast for Soesilo Bambang Yudhoyono, who also ran as an incumbent in the 2009 presidential election gained 60.8% of the votes. Swing voters are always a segment of voters that candidates try to win over (Mayer 2008).

Examining swing voters in the context of political communication is crucial as they act as the largest segment of voters that could directly shape election results (Kirzinger, Munana, and Brodie 2019, 3). Although campaigns spend much time and resources to motivate candidates' supporters and encourage them to cast their votes, their

most prominent persuasion strategies often target swing voters who have the lowest level of commitment (Mayer 2008). Elections contested between two or more candidates are very dynamic. These dynamics are much more difficult to predict when interactions between swing voters happen, which may change or maintain their votes. Their votes are as dynamic as they are receptive to various influences. High levels of electability do not mean a guarantee for a candidate's victory unless they are supported by a strong base of loyal voters (Kiefer 2005; Taylor 2007; Tomz and Van Houweling 2009; Hansford and Gomez 2010). The primary key to winning an election lies within a candidate's and their team's ability to attract as many voters as possible and maintain the loyalty of the voters that they have garnered (Schill and Kirk 2014).

Like any communication process, political communication also includes communication elements, comprising the communicator, message, media, and audience dimensions (McNair 2011). Political communication's elements interplay in political organizations, citizens, and media organizations (McNair 2011). The revolution in communication forms network communities, with individuals connected through the network as their main components. The elements within these networks are social agents, such as individuals, groups, organizations, and even communities. Communicative interactions establish the relations that form networks connecting these elements. Whereas the industrial revolution was marked by the formation of mass societies with collective components consisting of groups, organizations, and communities, the communication revolution is signified by mass societies' shift to network societies with individuals connected by networks as their main components. The types of mediums for mass communication are mass media and broadcasting, while network communities have interactive narrowcasts as their primary medium (Dijk 2006). It corresponds with the concept outlined by Manuel Castell regarding the shift of mass communication to mass self-communication (Castells 2011). Media is crucial in political processes; not only does it transmit messages from political organizations to their audiences, but it also transmits messages from the people to their political leaders. In a democratic political

system, the function of the media is a political transmitter of messages from outside the media and journalists and other message producers such as bloggers (McNair 2011).

This research employed a socio-psychological model to explain how urban millennial students changed their votes in the 2014 and 2019 presidential elections. This research aims to determine social and psychological factors. Sociological factors are race, religion, area of residence (urban or rural), and class, the psychological variables examined in this study comprise issue orientation, candidate evaluation, and party identification. These socio-psychological variables align with McNair's argument that the variety of responses that might occur in message reception is influenced by several factors, including receivers' political affiliation, age, ethnicity, and gender (McNair 2011).

Unlike the US voters, who tend to have high levels of party identification, Indonesian voters tend to have low levels of party identification, causing support towards presidential candidates endorsed by the voters' preferred parties to become blurred. Electoral victories are not always predictable through examination of party identification. In Indonesia, party identification correlates minimally with presidential votes. For example, although the PDIP-backed presidential and regent candidates won the Presidential election in Malang, some of their voters did not vote for PDIP as a party (Fuad 2014). The people gave both positive and negative responses towards the candidates' party coalition on social media during the 2014 elections, although the details of those responses were yet to be known.

This study attempts to answer what factors shape vote swings and how urban millennial students changed their votes from 2014 to the 2019 presidential election. The socio-psychological model is adapted from the Columbian and Michigan models and their combination from a qualitative approach. The model examined the contributions of social and psychological variables of the voters, considering the transition from traditional mass media to mass self-communication and particularly the role of social media, which would be this study's novelty.

LITERATURE REVIEW

It was challenging to make sense of voting from the rational choice model that weighs cost and benefits because political participation is quasi-irrational. Social and psychological conditions are intertwined with individuals' daily activities. The Columbian and Michigan model explained the factors that might shape individual voters' choices. The Columbian model emphasizes social characteristics (ethnicity, religion, area of residence, class, social groups, and familial relations) to help explain how voters make sense of the political world despite their lack of attentiveness to politics. In contrast, the Michigan model explains votes from a psychological perspective (Hutchings and Jefferson 2018). Mass media, which acts as one of the factors included in the model, also influences voters' decision-making, although not as strong as the opinion leaders from the individuals' social groups. The latter assert the most significant influence (Visser 1998). The communication revolution that turned mass communication into mass self-communication serves as social media's contribution and role as a source of information besides mass media.

Swing Voters

Swing voters can cast their vote in any direction. They do not have a particular or strong commitment to any candidate and may support or receive pressure from both sides of the electoral campaigns (Mayer 2008). Swing voters tend to have a relatively balanced view regarding the candidates and may support or dislike both candidates. The critical point is that swing voters are positioned in the middle of the spectrum and are somewhat undecided on which candidate is better than the other(s) (Mayer 2007). Swing voters may switch their votes from election to election and tend to be ideologically neutral (Dowding 2018).

Not every swing voter changes their vote during campaign periods. However, if the campaigns fail to offer anything new, vote changes may occur nearing the election date, which may determine a candidate's victory or loss (Mayer 2007). Mayer's (2007) hypotheses that have been

proven are: 1) swing voters are less attached to particular political parties compared to non-swing voters; 2) swing voters tend to be more moderate, both in terms of ideology and issue orientation; 3) swing voters are less informed on politics and are less interested in politics compared to non-swing voters, and 4) swing voters are demographically different from non-swing voters.

The Socio-psychological Model

The two prominent perspectives on the American public's voting behavior are the sociological and psychological models (Knoke 1974). Both models explain political participation or decision-making with causal mechanisms but with emphasized variables (Knoke 1974). The Columbia School emphasizes the role of social groups in elections. However, people deal with politics individually; they tend to refer to their groups' or public's interests and make decisions. In 1954, Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and McPhee specifically emphasized the role of family and political socialization (Sarlamenov and Jovanoski 2014). The sociological factors that shape individuals' decisions are 1) political socialization; 2) family as an agent of socialization and a factor for voting; 3) friends as an agent of primary socialization and a factor of voting; and 4) the media as agents of secondary socialization and a factor for voting (Sarlamenov and Jovanoski 2014). Additionally, scholars of the Columbian model also found that electoral campaigns essentially have two effects: strengthening preferences that had already been decided at the beginning of the campaigns and triggering uncommitted voters' latent preferences (Hutchings and Jefferson 2018). This latent preference is caused by three social characteristics included in the Index of Political Predisposition (IPP): 1) class status, 2) race or religion, and 3) the urban or rural residence of voters (Hutchings and Jefferson 2018).

Whereas the Columbian School's electoral studies considered the socio-psychological processes and social variables, the psychological tradition is emphasized more by the Michigan Survey Research Centre. From its study of the 1952 presidential election and the following two decades, the Michigan School developed and improved the approach

to the study of political behavior that, although the theory recognizes divisions at the group level, emphasized the psychological processes that intervene with voters' social norms and their behavior at the polling station. Campbell et al. (1954) identified several variables deemed most relevant to both the number of voters and votes: 1) personal identification with a particular political party; 2) concern with a national policy issue; and 3) personal interests in the presidential candidate(s). Votes for a particular presidential candidate are seen because of interactions between these three variables, which may reinforce or contradict each other in determining a voter's decision.

In the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) chain, organisms with characteristics and capacity respond to particular stimuli from their environment. This response is shaped by the nature of the stimulus and the condition of the organism. According to this model, there are two primary sources of behavior: the organism's (human's) environment and its action, which is a response to the stimulus generated by its environment. Humans as organisms are a source of epistemological problems. Although an organism's physical and environmental condition can be observed, a human's internal condition cannot (Valentine 1992). The variety of internal and intrapersonal behaviors results from people's electoral environment, which has different meanings. The factors and mechanisms that mediate the situation and stimulus must be discovered. Epistemological problems can be solved by postulating a specific mental process that may help explain voting behavior by conceptualizing an intervening variable between environmental conditions and actions (Visser 1998). The inter-positioning of the intervening variable between the stimulus and the response simplifies this approach. The intervening variable connects various stimuli with the response and thus allows explanations for hard to learn behaviors.

A study by the Survey Research Centre (SRC) at the University of Michigan pointed to three essential features of their research: 1) emphasis on the measurement of attitudes and origin of perceptions, experience, and general motivations, which were presented on a Likert scale and attitude measurement; 2) the SRC examined a national sample

rather than a quota sample; and 3) the SRC used open-ended questions in its interviews, as open-ended questions encourage rapport between the respondent and the researcher, and allow the respondent to give different meanings or answers from those offered by fixed-alternative questions. To obtain as diverse a range of answers as possible, Likert argued that it is better to get spontaneous responses to general questions and classify them later (Visser 1998).

Inner needs and experience will charge certain regions of the political life space with positive and negative valence, directing voters' voting action. Campbell called this process attitudes, defined as 'orientations to the elements of national politics, seen by the voter as negative or positive'. When the attitudinal powers at work incline unequivocally towards a candidate, the voting act will be carried out without delay. Be that as it may, on the off chance that the drive inclines within the course of the other candidate, the voter will falter between the candidates, and the vote will be put off or canceled.

An important part of the Michigan study is its cognitive structural analysis of the socio-political field, its assessment of the number of regions that exist for the voter, and the extent to which these regions are interconnected. The Michigan researchers made a distinction between social factors and attitudes in their 'normal voting' approach. The purpose is to identify which would provide the most parsimonious model. Party identification served as the model's pattern, subsuming the social variables causally going before it. Theoretically, the Michigan School did not use a different set of intervening variables from the Columbian model. These intervening variables are perceptions, opinions, attitudes, and party identification, which were also the center of the Michigan study, along with cognitive structures and evaluation variables (Visser 1998).

Philip Converse developed the partisanship concept with Angus Campbell, Warren Miller, and Donald E. Stokes, the authors of *American Voter*. In *The Concept of a Normal Vote*, Converse (1966) showed that large fluctuations of votes in different presidential elections without similar levels of distribution of party identification are common (Hutch-

ings and Jefferson 2018). Converse inferred that election results could be categorized into the regular vote and short-term deviation from the regular vote. The term 'normal vote' implies that election results mainly reflect the stability of voters' commitment to the presidential candidates (Hutchings and Jefferson 2018). In other words, if the majority of the voters identify themselves with a particular party, we can say that the party with the most extensive support would win as voters only vote based on their party identification (Hutchings and Jefferson 2018). A short-term deviation from the average vote means that election results are sometimes influenced by random or irregular conditions such as scandals or international crises, which do not substantially affect the balance of the entire partisan support in elections (Hutchings and Jefferson 2018).

Mass Self-Communication

Traditional mass communication media such as books, newspapers, films, radio, and television also accommodate interactions, such as through calls to the television and radio stations, letters, or electronic mail. Internet diffusion makes it possible for communication that was previously one-directional to shift to multidirectional and instant, such as video-posting and live streaming on YouTube and blogs with RSS links on multiple websites. At the same time, messages are produced independently by the producer; similar goes with the targeting of the receiver, capturing of content, and networks. Combining online news, interactive blogging, electronic mail, and RSS feeds have turned traditional mass media such as newspapers into different communication components.

Media corporations carry out internet-based communication and form social communication. Users build their mass communication systems through SMS (short message services), blogs, vlogs, podcasts, wikis, and the like (Castells 2009). Content is shared, peer-to-peer networks allow the circulation, mixing, and reformatting of digital content. In 2006 Lenhart and Fox had found that 52% of bloggers mainly make content for their satisfaction in doing mass self-communication. It was

closer to the concept of electronic autism rather than actual communication; such content is prone to be received by anybody and recycled unpredictably (Castells 2009). Internet connection and peer-to-peer networks turn this form of interaction into mass communication, allowing outreach to global audiences (Castells 2009).

Social media is an example of the change of traditional mass communication into mass self-communication. Whereas the socio-psychological model states that opinion leaders disseminate the message within traditional mass media to influence voters' choices, in-network communities, opinion leaders act as hubs within social network sites that increase the intensity of political communication (Karlsen 2015).

Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses

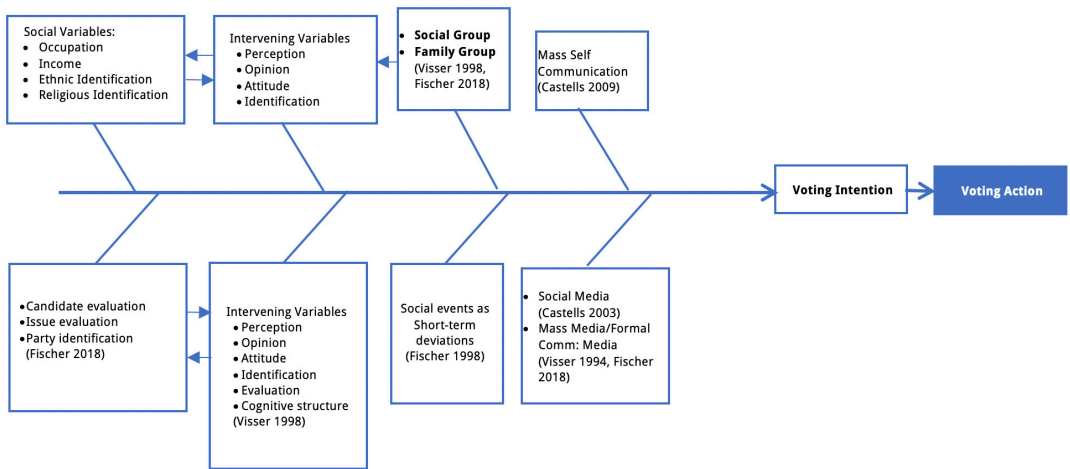


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework

Our theoretical framework generated several hypotheses as possible answers to our research questions (Figure 1). Our first hypothesis is generated from the concept of millennials as digital natives, who make up the most social media users. This hypothesis is that *millennials decided to change their vote in the 2019 presidential election because of information encountered on social media*. This information may be generated by social media accounts owned by mass media (e.g., *kompas.com*) or by

other accounts. Our second hypothesis is that *millennial voters changed their votes because they were triggered by a specific presidential and vice-presidential candidate(s)*. The third is that *social characteristics, such as class, race, religion, and area of residence affect voters' voting decisions*. The fourth is that *social variables indirectly affect voters' voting decisions when disseminated through social groups such as neighborhoods, primary groups such as families, and mass media as formal communication media*. Our last hypothesis is that *psychological factors contributed to swing decision of voters (with intervening variables including perceptions, opinions, attitudes, identification, cognitive structures, and evaluation)*. These intervening variables are incorporated into our set of psychological factors and can be observed from voters' evaluation of the presidential candidates, party identification, and candidates' orientation of issues.

METHODS

This study seeks to reveal a) the socio-psychological variables that contribute to voters' decision to swing their votes; and b) the role of social media and mass media in the process of decision-making regarding votes.

A post-positivist paradigm was combined with a socio-psychological model to reveal the reason behind urban millennial student voters' decision to shift their votes and the thought process leading up to it. This study employed a qualitative approach with the descriptive-explorative method by explaining socio-psychological variables and the socio-psychological aspects that push voters to change their votes. A qualitative approach was chosen as every value, behavior, and interaction between social actors and their environments can be quantified; people's perceptions highly depend on norms, culture, experiences, and other characteristics internal to everyone (Chariri 2009). Therefore, the quantification of behavior, values and social phenomena may not represent reality (Chariri 2009). We thus hope that our approach could reveal the factors behind vote swings in specific contexts.

This study employed a holistic sing-case study design focusing on urban millennial student swing voters as our analytical unit to test an

established theory critically. Single-case studies are appropriate to test extreme cases or outliers that deviate from the theoretical norm or daily occurrences or common cases. The researcher lacks the access needed to study past events empirically. In such cases, a case study strategy is appropriate as even descriptions may serve as revelations; they may facilitate the study of a single case in two or more temporal scopes (e.g., longitudinal case) (Yin 2014). Our case study strategy does not control the observed behaviors and focuses on real-life contemporary phenomena (Yin 2014).

In this study, we choose millennial students who switch their votes between Jokowi and Prabowo in the context of urban millennials and digital natives. Vote swings in elections contested by the same candidates are not unheard of, as in Soesilo Bambang Yudhoyono's competition against Megawati in 2004 and 2009. For this project, we studied the results of the 2014 and 2019 presidential elections obtained from the General Elections Commission (Komisi Pemilihan Umum or KPU) as our secondary data. After the vote count, the recapitulation was announced by the KPU on 21 May 2019. The KPU announced Jokowi-Ma'ruf Amin won the race. They defeated Prabowo and Sandiaga Uno. Thus, for the second time, Jokowi had won over Prabowo. Jokowi had received 85,607,362 votes in the 2019 election or 55.5% of the national votes, while Prabowo got 68,650,239 or 44.5% of the national votes according to the Decree of the General Elections Commission of the Republic of Indonesia (*Surat Keputusan Komisi Pemilihan Umum Republik Indonesia*) No. 987/PL.01.8-Kpt/06/ KPU/V/2019. In 2014, Jokowi and Jusuf Kalla won 70,997,833 or 53.15% of the total votes, while Prabowo and his running mate Hatta received 62,576,444 votes or 46.85% (Maharani and Aritonang 2014).

We used a purposive sampling strategy to recruit our swing voters. Sample criteria that we use are: 1) the sample must be born between 1980 and 2000, 2) consist of males and females who had voted in the 2014 and 2019 presidential elections, 3) switched their votes from Jokowi to Prabowo or vice versa, 4) owned a social media account, and 5) student who domiciled in Greater Jakarta. We divided our informants into

two groups: 1) those who switched their votes from Jokowi to Prabowo; and 2) those who previously had voted for Prabowo in 2014 but recently voted for Jokowi. The method that we used to obtain our primary data was in-depth semi-structured interviews. The identities of the informants were kept confidential for ethical reasons. The informants were asked to fill out a consent form before the interviews.

The analysis technique that we used was the pattern matching logic (Yin 2014) to connect our data with the hypotheses proposed in our theoretical framework section (Figure 1). This study analyzed the data's matching pattern with the socio-psychological model derived from the Columbian and Michigan School and our theoretical framework. This research is retrospective, where informants were asked to recount when they switched their votes. We carried out our research from September 2019 to June 2020. After we concluded our interviews, they were transcribed through several coding procedures, such as open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. Our consent form included a section where informants were asked to verify that all information disclosed during the interviews was accurate. In addition, the interview transcript was confirmed after the interview by sending the transcript to the informants to verify.

DISCUSSION

We grouped our data into two clusters, one obtained from the voters who swung their votes from Prabowo to Jokowi and the other from those who switched from Jokowi to Prabowo. All informants were millennials with social media accounts. The names of the informants were noted in initials to maintain confidentiality. All the informants were postgraduate students.

The media shapes perceptions that vice presidents do not play a role in state policies. Voters' evaluation of Ma'ruf Amin pertained to his old age, which meant he did not need to run for vice president. Integrity, competence, reliability, youth, and energy were among the cognitive categories expected from the candidates. In the era of mass self-communication, the media had become the central platform for

people to build their identities and share stories online; this mediated relationship can later be manifested in offline daily life (McQuail and Deuze 2020). Unlike McQuail and Deuze stated, the millennial swing voters we studied did not want their identity to be disclosed online, including to their families. Personal identities were built offline, while political neutrality was showcased in the virtual world. Mass self-communication is applied to a specific job. Social media also involved in the spread of misinformation. With an abundance of misinformation going about, people must be critical in evaluating content on social media (Wells 2018).

Table 1. Informant Data

JOKOWI TO PRABOWO		PRABOWO TO JOKOWI	
1	2	3	4
Birth Year: 1988	Birth Year: 1990	Birth Year: 1993	Birth Year: 1992
Occupation: civil servant	Occupation: civil servant	Occupation: entrepreneur, freelancer	Occupation: journalist
Master's student in Communication Studies at a state university in Indonesia	Master's student in Communication Studies at a state university in Indonesia	Master's student in Communication Studies at a state university in Indonesia	Master's student in Communication Studies
Married/1 kid	Single	Married/No children	Single
Female	Male	Male	Female

Source: interviews

Political memes will always influence political dialogs (Wells 2018). Critical thinking skills and skepticism in viewing online content is a skill taught by higher education institutions (Wells 2018) to millennial voters. Memes significantly affect the political sphere, especially for today's generation (Antal 2018). The millennial swing voters had used memes trending on Twitter as jokes in their social circles, followed by searching for news related to the topics included in the memes. These swing voters did not reshare the memes they found on Twitter. Internet users often use memes to respond to other users on social media or other online forums. Memes were often used for communication in various settings such as political campaigns, and this purpose was achieved. Certain memes represented an action and were also understood by internet users as such (Grundlingh 2018). Memes are made using templates combined with funny texts or irony conveyed through

the internet, representing a form of socio-political participation that is relatively strong within online communities (Ross and Rivers 2019). Memes can be attractive and have political affiliations (Zittrain 2014). Political amusingness and metaphors contained in memes explain constituent campaigns and political satire. Through the evaluative outlines, metaphors bring amusement towards its targets and work as a means of feedback. Memes were created and spread in an organized way, which took advantage of anonymity and, with specific purposes, sent through social media such as Twitter and garnered followers (Antal 2018).

This research reveals that millennial swing voters did not have opinion leaders. The similarity across all voters was that they all watched television to observe the debates. Even news obtained online was verified by seeing whether the same information was televised. There was skepticism against news outlets due to its adverse credibility and large amounts of clickbait. Mainstream media such as Kompas, Detik, Tempo, and Kumparan were the leading online news informants accessed. Informants accessed the news through news aggregators as they were practical, and there had been reluctance on their part to read through the abundance of available news. This condition is understandable as there was abundant news available online in Indonesia. As of 26 May 2020, as many as 1,321 news media—print and digital—are verified by the Press Council or *Dewan Pers* (Dewan Pers 2020).

Our findings strengthen existing arguments that politicians need the media. News written from specific perspectives has relations with politics and is influential in society. News has an essential role in supporting the effective functioning of a democratic society. First, the public has widely recognized that the media functions are to ensure that all people have access to various news, opinions, and quality analysis. Second, no single media owner can exercise monopoly and excessive influence over political agenda (Foster 2012). This research shows that there had been skepticism on the millennial swing voters regarding these two functions.

Skepticism against the media is related to media ownership and its relations with politics. However, *Investigasi Tempo* had remained as one

of the trusted coverages that voters chose to access. Tempo is a weekly newsletter covering politics, economy, and in-depth investigations on various issues in Indonesia. Ahsan explained that Tempo was established in an era where antiparty sentiments and rejections of partisan interests within the press were strong. Therefore, Tempo's founder emphasized the importance of mass media's neutrality or independence (Firdausi 2019).

The large number of clickbait had caused distrust of the online media on the platform. Clickbait snares create billions of clicks per year and are characterized as internet-based promoting material that uses phonetic components and holes in data to bring out interest in consumers). The Selective Exposure Theory is supported by evidence that people mainly click on news that supports their political stances or affiliation (Mihelich 2019).

Millennial swing voters rarely read printed media. The price of printed media is costly, as they include the cost of distribution. Voters also want instant access to information. Online media can provide this need. Reuters reported that people have learned to consume news through networks rather than purchasing or subscribing to newspapers (Lundén 2009).

Our research finds that presidential debates had a role in influencing voters' vote swings. First, presidential debates provided input to voters. Second, news media often designated these debates as nationwide programs (Ordway and Wihbey 2016). Third, debates are critical elements of campaigns (Benoit, Hansen, and Verser 2003). Fourth, debates present candidates' sides and ask them to discuss similar topics (Benoit, Hansen, and Verser 2003). Debates thus can help voters to compare candidates and make up their voting decisions.

Face-to-face debates allow candidates to take on their opponents directly, which may be a point of consideration for voters (Benoit, Hanse, and Verser 2003). In The Guardian newspaper on 16 April 2010, Marina Hyde said that debates do not happen coincidentally but are organized just like any other public event to ensure that they succeed and are structured and dynamic to create a dramatic impression (Coleman

2013). As a form of campaign, debates improve voters' knowledge of issues and their meaning (some issues may serve as voters' points for candidate evaluation) and change candidates' issue preferences (Benoit, Hansen and Verser 2003). Debates may have an agenda-setting effect (shifting issues from the media agenda to the public agenda). It is designed to change perceptions about candidates' personalities, significantly influence the perceptions of candidates' competence or 'leadership ability,' and influence voting preferences (Benoit, Hansen and Verser 2003; Kiouisis and McCombs 2004).

Our findings show an absence of informants' identification with specific parties. The Aksi 212 had acted as the event that pushed informants to evaluate the candidates. A controversial statement by former Jakarta Governor Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (Ahok) in the Seribu Islands on 27 September 2016 triggered the movement and its series of events, which have been held around seven times. These events carried Islamic symbols and involved demonstrations demanding the criminalization of blasphemy by Ahok. These led to strengthening identity politics, particularly religious sentiments, ahead of the 2017 Jakarta gubernatorial elections. The MUI's Gerakan Nasional Pengawal Fatwa (GNPF) was behind this movement. The demonstrations were started with a series of orations and sermons by several Islamic leaders, including the chairman: Chairman of MUI GNPF Bachtiar Nasir and Rizieq Shihab. Aksi 212 was not the direct cause behind the millennial swing voters' switch from Prabowo to Jokowi. The informants saw that Aksi 212 had long-term effects, up to the campaign period for the 2019 presidential election, which also saw the politicization of religious issues. Although both candidates brought up religion in their campaigns, Prabowo was perceived by the voters to be exaggerating the issue. Thus, voters decided not to support Prabowo.

Our student-focused research found that ethnicity played a part in voters' voting decisions. One of the informants stated that they voted for Jokowi in 2014 because they admired Jusuf Kalla from the same ethnic background as their father. Similarly, another voted for Prabowo and Uno because Uno was of Padang descent, like the voter's partner.

However, ethnicity was not the main factor behind the vote swings. Fraga (2016) stated that race or ethnicity groups do not affect voters' support for candidates with the same ethnicity or race. The Columbian approach states that most voters from the same religious group will choose a candidate with the same religion. Our findings show that voters tended to choose candidates with the same religion, but religion was not the causal variable behind millennials' vote swings.

Our study supports the literature that positions family as an agent of political socialization in elections (Visser 1998). Family is the source of most individuals' affiliations, such as social status, and thus influences electoral choices. People with familial relations usually exhibit similarities in voting decisions. argued that the familial relationship between parents and children plays an essential part in actors' political orientation. Fundamental values that shape a person's political life, including identification with and loyalty towards certain parties, are learned in the family (Sarlamonov and Jovanoski 2014). Intense communication within families, whether directly or through messaging applications, exposes much political information, especially during campaign periods. The millennial swing voters in our study responded to such messages with indifference.

This study's contribution relates to the informants' occupation. Two voters who switched from Jokowi to Prabowo were state employees. They shifted their votes not necessarily because they liked Prabowo but rather because they had been disappointed with Jokowi as an incumbent. Internal perceptions and experiences within the bureaucracy played a part in these voters' thought processes and decisions to not vote for the incumbent again. Informants working as state employees in public relations were occupied with issues close to the government leadership daily and often had to handle chaos caused by the leadership, such as when Jokowi suddenly changed his work visit plans. The voters have met directly with the incumbent, but not often. Many of the incumbent's policies that directly impacted the voters, such as work bonuses, were not implemented during the previous presidency. Informants' evaluation of several incumbent programs, such as the bureaucratic cuts, was

viewed favorably. However, the regulation of budget and staff allocation sometimes seemed contradictory to the spirit of bureaucratic reform. Public service had also been limited to certain areas with the budget that had also been centralized. The Minister's leadership had often been seen as not being part of the bureaucracy but rather as distributed political seats, which often complicate the work of state employees, causing informants' disappointment towards the incumbent.

Although they discussed political subjects, social groups did not play many parts lead to swinging vote decisions. The millennial swing voters came from the same student clusters, with the same academic environment, without ethnic identification, socio-economic background, and religion. These voters' secondary groups were their work environments, where their colleagues occasionally share information on the candidates, but our informants said they did not process the information further. The voters' main groups were their families, where we found pressured voters through messaging applications and face-to-face interactions to behave appropriately. However, the voters did not follow through with such pressures.

This research shows that the issue of religion has been ambiguous. Our informants had selective perceptions regarding the religions they held and their personal experiences. Both candidates used religious issues in their campaigns; Prabowo's exaggerated emphasis on the issue even perversely caused millennial swing voters to not vote for him. Complexities emerged when the incumbent chose a vice president with a religious and academic background. When it was gossiped that Prabowo would choose an ulama as his running mate, the millennial swing voters became further detached from him. It would be unpreferable for the millennial swing voters if Prabowo were elected and religion became the center of the state's structures. Religion was seen as a private matter. Although religion played an essential aspect in voters' lives, it was condemned when the candidate took advantage of religious issues because piggybacking on religious issues is scowled. An issue that voters had expected to emerge is about women and human rights. The running mate that the incumbent chose signaled his ambition to win

over the people. However, the incumbent did not provide clarity of how he would stand on religious issues. People were faced with pressures from various groups.

The millennial voters' choice to swing their votes was made through thought forms, including their working experiences, without party affiliation. None of the millennial swing voters we interviewed had ties or identification with a particular political party. They identified the incumbent as a 'puppet' of Megawati, who had close ties to PDIP. To them, parties mainly want to hold power without considering the interests of the people. Our findings regarding cognitive structures came from the informants who worked as public servants. Inner needs and critical thinking were incorporated in their opinions that the government should be fair in all regions of the country (not just Papua or any region). The millennial swing voters we interviewed evaluated both the incumbent and the opposition by comparing their track record and their claims in their campaigns, debates, and the media. The incumbent's track record during his previous terms that had been experienced by the millennial swing voters included his incomplete mandate as the governor of Jakarta, the road infrastructures that had supported particular regions' economy, the Government's public relations staff (*tenaga humas pemerintah*) project that offended the informants (since they as of now worked as public relations in a ministry, but the incumbent put another GPR staff with higher installment with no reason – in their supposition). The voters in our study had favorable views toward the construction of infrastructures in several regions in the country, which were showcased in the media. However, they showed distaste towards the incumbent persona, which was seen as indecisive and strongly influenced by his endorsing political party, PDIP, and Megawati. For the informants, the incumbent had displayed himself as a superlative instead of a challenger.

A different evaluation was given towards the challenger (Prabowo). In the 2019 election, he embodied a different personal branding from the one he had used in 2014. The millennial swing voters were disappointed that the candidate they previously supported had seemed to

change, appearing to be less intelligent, evaluated from his performance in the presidential debates. The voters also did not like Prabowo's appearance along with a religious figure on campaign banners. For informants, Prabowo was connected to socio-religious events such as Aksi 212. Moreover, he was related to the disinformation case of Ratna Sarumpaet. Prabowo had a problem with the consistency with his military identity in 2014 and the persona in 2019. On the other hand, voters expected consistency and coherence between the candidate's persona and personality.

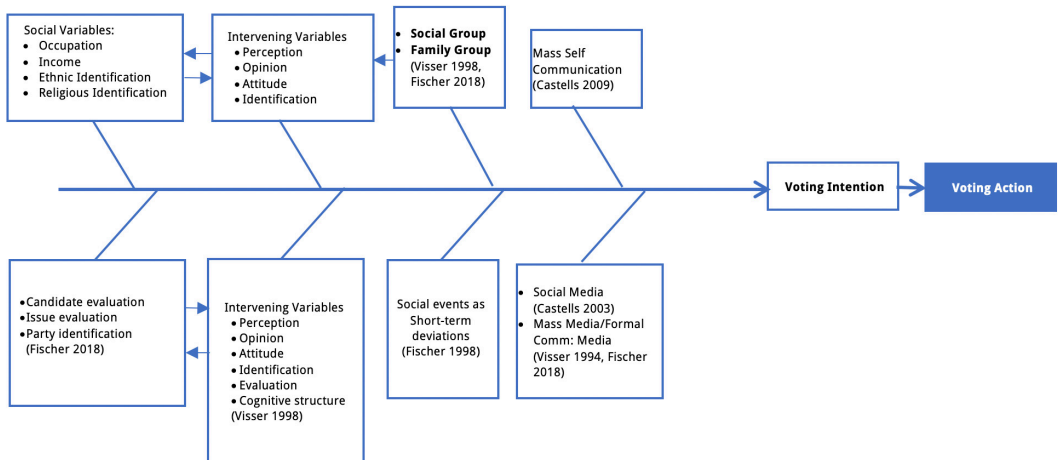
The candidate evaluation that all informants carried out was not limited to considerations of personal attributes. The informants' perception of Jokowi was that Megawati controlled him. The impression he made was what Indonesians had hoped for: a down-to-earth leader. The '*blusukan*' were seen as a gimmick to show a leader's intention to get close to the people. President Jokowi wore a jacket in his motorcycle tour to Bantargadung that ended at the Pelabuhan Ratu Beach. The performance was instead deemed distracting for informants. The perception of possible crafting of a political dynasty had also been challenging to avoid. This finding corresponds with Irawanto's (2019) conclusion that candidates mainly present changes on the surface, namely on their appearances. These strategies successfully gained the media's attention, but not long as voters can detect genuinity.

As a party who had worked directly with Jokowi, the millennial swing voters who worked as state employees viewed Jokowi as a reliable figure during his term as the mayor of Solo. This perception depreciated when he ran for president during his term as Jakarta Governor, leaving his gubernatorial post after one year. It was as if he had neglected the mandate that the people of Jakarta gave him for his political ambitions; the Jakarta gubernatorial election that brought him to the office itself had seen societal divisions. A similar evaluation was given to Sandiaga Uno, who not long after his election to the post of Jakarta's vice governor decided to run as Prabowo's vice president. The mandate that the people of Jakarta had given him seemed to be neglected for electoral ambitions. Thus, it is crucial to have a *logo* that

is close to the people and includes work performance that showcases responsibility and completion. Such results would demonstrate to the millennial generation the importance of keeping promises and committing to one’s responsibilities. The millennial voters in our study had rather been disappointed by the person who seemed to have failed the people’s mandate.

The millennial swing voters also expressed the perception that military figure may be appropriate to govern a developing country with relatively strong structures. However, Prabowo’s association with religious issues had driven voters away. The impression that Prabowo was a reliable figure, particularly among the voters who had met him in person, diminished. They had turned to see Prabowo as unreliable to lead the country, especially without a reliable team. Prabowo had changed his logos to a figure associated with a particular group, which deviated from the influential figure he showed in 2014. The strong impression ceased after Prabowo repeatedly appeared in the media as being involved in the case of Ratna Sarumpaet, who was proven to commit a public lie.

Figure 2. Research Results



Source: Authors’ analysis

CONCLUSION

This research's empirical contribution is that social media did not contribute to the swing votes in the 2019 presidential election. In our study, the urban millennial postgraduate student voters did not carry out mass self-communication covering politics because they did not want their political stances revealed on social media. No opinion leader was identified in our study. Political memes on social media are more of a starting point to search more information regarding the trending political issues. Our study's urban millennial postgraduate student voters did not access print mass media and preferred accessing news on news aggregators and digital media. The credibility of the media had importance to them. Our empirical contribution weakens the hypothesis that "*millennials decided to change their vote in the 2019 presidential election because of information encountered on social media*".

Answering our research question and stating our conceptual contribution, religion and ethnicity were the social variables that contributed to voters' decision to switch their votes. Identification with these aspects had come from familial identification. Family had acted as an agent of political socialization, shaping perceptions and opinions. Social groups, on the other hand, had not contributed to voters' voting decisions. There had been both positive and negative perceptions regarding the personal images or branding and consistency of the candidates' identities. Partisan identification had not contributed to the vote swings. The events related to the issue of blasphemy had influenced evaluations of the candidates, particularly the candidates' relation to the event—this supports the hypothesis that "*millennial voters changed their votes because they were triggered by specific event related to the presidential and vice-presidential candidate(s)*." The candidates' attributes such as integrity, education, capacity, and sincerity were among the attributes expected of the candidates. The candidates' performance in debates also had a role in voters' decisions to swing their votes.

Our socio-psychological model on urban millennial student voters in Indonesia can be developed further using a basis for quantitative measurement of various studies. Factors such as political memes and

news aggregators need further research. The media needs to educate the masses to achieve better literacy and avoid spreading SARA (*suku, agama, ras, antargolongan*), or ethnicity, religion, race, and intergroup issues. Any information published must meet the ethics of journalism and digital media guidelines. Political organizations need to consider ethical factors and possible long-term effects of bringing issues to the political sphere. There is need to be other considerations besides the goal to win the presidential seat. Lastly, as psychology has established a way to understand humans' thought processes and the characteristics of social influences and interactions, people need to deepen their understanding of the political behavior of different generations and avoid imposing their opinions on others directly and on social media.

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