

REDEFINING POLITICAL EDUCATION IN THE DIGITAL ERA: POLITICAL PARTY FUNDS AND DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP MATURITY IN INDONESIA

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Abstract

The digital era demands a fundamental transformation in political education practices, particularly in forming digitally competent citizens (digital citizenship). This study examines the influence of political party fund allocations in Indonesia as a political education instrument in promoting digital citizenship maturity at the national level. Using a qualitative approach through policy document analysis, regulations, and political party financial accountability reports, this study examines the extent to which the distribution and utilization mechanisms of party funds, as regulated under Government Regulation No. 1 of 2018, contribute to improving digital literacy and civic political participation. The findings indicate that political party fund allocations in Indonesia have not substantially contributed to fostering digital citizenship maturity, owing to weak orientation of political education programs toward digital competencies, minimal accountability in fund utilization, and the absence of measurable success indicators in the digital citizenship dimension. This study argues that a paradigm redefinition of party political education is required, one that transcends procedural compliance and is oriented toward citizens' digital empowerment. The results are expected to contribute to policy reform in party fund governance and the strengthening of digital democracy in Indonesia.

Keywords: Digital Citizenship, Digital Literacy, Digital Democracy, Political Education, Political Party Fund

1. Introduction

The digital transformation has fundamentally reshaped the political landscape. Civic participation no longer confines itself to voting booths but extends into digital spaces, from policy discussions on social media to government oversight through online platforms. In this context, digital citizenship emerges as an increasingly critical competency for modern citizens: the ability to access, evaluate, and responsibly participate in political life through digital media. For the purposes of this study, digital citizenship is conceptually defined as citizens' capacity to engage critically, ethically, and responsibly in digitally mediated public life encompassing competence, social participation, and civic engagement in online spaces. Operationally, this study assesses digital citizenship maturity through Choi's (2016) four-dimensional framework; ethics, media and information literacy, critical resistance, and participation and engagement as reflected in the substance and design of party-funded political education programs.

Indonesia, as the world's third-largest democracy with over 212 million internet users, faces considerable challenges in this regard. The Indonesian Digital Society Index (Indeks Masyarakat Digital Indonesia/IMDI) is an annual composite index published by the Ministry of Communication and Digital Affairs (Komdigi) through its research arm, Puslitbang Aptika IKP, drawing on nationwide household surveys across four sub-indices — digital skills, digital culture, digital ethics, and digital safety. The index is scored on a 0–100 scale, where a higher score indicates a more mature level of digital society development; the in 2024 recorded only 43.34 out of 100. Reflecting that the digital maturity of Indonesian society remains in the lower-middle range. The index grew by only 0.16 points from the previous year, indicating stagnation in citizens' digital capacity development. Meanwhile, more than 1.3 million negative content pieces circulated on social media between October 2024 and March 2025 (Komdigi 2024) predominantly comprising disinformation, hoaxes, and hate speech related to political and electoral issues, demonstrating that the growth of digital access has not been matched by adequate digital literacy and ethical maturity.

In a democratic system, political parties bear a constitutional responsibility as a primary pillar of political education. The Indonesian government mandates financial assistance to political parties, sourced from the state budget (APBN) and regional budgets (APBD), as an instrument to support political education for party members and the broader public. Under Government Regulation (PP) No. 1 of 2018, parties that secured seats in the House of Representatives are entitled to Rp1,000 per valid vote, amounting to hundreds of billions of rupiah annually. Regulations further require that 60 percent of these funds be allocated to public political education.

However, a conspicuous gap exists between the regulatory mandate and implementation reality. Officially recognized political education activities encompass raising awareness of civic rights and obligations, deepening Pancasila values, and understanding political ethics and culture formulations that are entirely conventional and make no mention of digital citizenship dimensions. As a result, party-funded political education programs remain anchored to an outdated paradigm, while citizens' needs to navigate digital political spaces continue to grow.

This study asks: to what extent has the allocation of political party funds in Indonesia been associated with, or relevant to, improvements in citizens' digital citizenship maturity? The study aims to: (1) map patterns of party fund allocation within the framework of national political education; (2) analyze the relevance of party political education programs to digital citizenship formation; and (3) formulate policy reform recommendations oriented toward strengthening digital citizenship in Indonesia.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Digital Citizenship: From Access to Participation

The concept of digital citizenship has evolved significantly since it was first codified in academic literature. Mossberger, Tolbert, and McNeal (2008) defined digital citizens as those who use the internet regularly and effectively in daily life. Ribble and Bailey (2007) subsequently framed digital citizenship as norms of appropriate and responsible behavior in technology use. The most recent developments in conceptualizing digital citizenship move beyond technical competencies toward civic participation dimensions. Mossberger and Tolbert

(2021) emphasized that digital citizenship encompasses behaviors and dispositions in digital spaces, including civic engagement, equality, and activism.

Choi (2016) divided digital citizenship into four core elements: ethics, media and information literacy, critical resistance, and participation and engagement. This four-dimensional framework is the most relevant to this study's context, as it enables measurement of digital citizenship not merely from skills but from the quality of citizens' political engagement in digital spaces. In Indonesia, the discourse on digital citizenship has become increasingly urgent given the complexity of national digital space challenges, with the digital literacy index recording 3.78 out of 5 in 2024 (Komdigi 2024).

2.2. Political Education and the Role of Political Parties

In political science literature, political education is understood as a process of forming citizens' awareness, knowledge, and skills for active participation in democratic life. Prayugo and Prayitno (2022) affirmed that political education is a learning process that systematically shapes political consciousness and citizenship roles. In this framework, political parties occupy a strategic position as the most organized and widest-reaching agents of political socialization.

Law No. 2 of 2011 on Political Parties explicitly mandates political education as one of a party's primary functions. However, several studies indicate that implementation of this function falls far short of optimal. Research in Lampung Province revealed that the party financial assistance (banparpol) policy, designed to support political education and strengthen democratic quality, remains very limited in substantive implementation at the regional level (Putra, Waskito, and Riswan 2026).

2.3. Governance of Political Party Funds in Indonesia

State funding mechanisms for political parties in Indonesia are governed through a series of complementary regulations, including Law No. 2 of 2011, PP No. 5 of 2009, and Permendagri No. 36 of 2018. Research based on BPK audit data reveals a critical paradox: the absence of sanctions for non-compliance with the political education mandate, combined with parties' tendency to prioritize operational expenditure over educational responsibilities, fundamentally undermines policy objectives (Zainudin 2026).

2.4. Research Gap

A review of existing literature reveals that research on the relationship between party fund allocations and digital citizenship in Indonesia remains extremely limited. Most studies on party funds focus on financial accountability dimensions and general correlations with democratic quality, while digital citizenship research in Indonesia typically operates within formal education domains. Within the literature reviewed, few studies appear to have specifically examined whether and how political education funding mechanisms through parties contribute or fail to contribute to the formation of digital citizenship competencies among Indonesian citizens. This gap constitutes the academic justification for the present research.

3. Research Methods

This study employs a qualitative approach using document analysis combined with policy study. The qualitative approach was selected because the research aim is not merely to measure statistical correlations, but to gain in-depth understanding of the mechanisms, context, and meanings underlying party fund allocation practices in relation to digital citizenship formation (Creswell and Poth 2018). The research is descriptive-analytical in nature.

The unit of analysis encompasses three levels: (1) the regulatory level: the legal framework governing the use of party fund assistance; (2) the implementation level: party financial accountability reports (LPPK) and BPK audit findings; and (3) the conceptual level: the alignment between reported political education programs and digital citizenship dimensions per Choi's (2016) framework.

Primary data were obtained through document study of official regulations, party fund accountability reports, and BPK audit findings for the 2019–2024 period. Secondary data were obtained from academic publications, Indonesia's digital literacy index data (Komdigi), and reports from democratic oversight institutions such as International IDEA and Transparency International Indonesia.

Data analysis used thematic analysis as developed by Braun and Clarke (2006), proceeding through six stages: data familiarization, initial coding, theme identification, theme review, theme definition and naming, and report writing. This was supplemented by gap analysis, a technique that systematically compares normative conditions (what parties should do under regulations) with empirical conditions (what is documented in accountability reports).

Data validity was ensured through source triangulation (verifying each finding through at least three different document sources) and member checking through discussion of preliminary findings with political party policy experts and digital literacy researchers.

4. Results and Discussions

4.1. Conventional Political Education Orientation Unresponsive to Digital Dimensions

Analysis of technical regulations governing party fund use reveals that the officially established political education program framework remains entirely grounded in a conventional paradigm. Recognized forms of political education activities include deepening Pancasila and constitutional values, understanding civic rights and obligations, and increasing political participation and civic initiative. Not one of these officially recognized activity forms explicitly mentions digital literacy, digital ethics, or digital citizenship competencies as required components.

This creates a fundamental mismatch between Indonesia's digital democracy needs and party political education program design. Applying Choi's (2016) four-dimensional digital citizenship framework, this study finds that state-funded party political education programs only partially address political participation, without reaching the dimensions of digital ethics, media and information literacy, or critical resistance to disinformation the very competencies

most crucial for citizens navigating an increasingly complex digital information ecosystem.

4.2. Non-compliance and Weak Accountability in Fund Utilization

BPK findings reveal a systemic pattern of non-compliance in party fund management across all organizational levels. In the first semester of 2023, BPK examined 5,199 party fund accountability reports (LPJ) from 17 national parties and 5 regional parties, finding various irregularities. Concrete findings included discrepancies between reported fund amounts and those disbursed by regional governments, disbursements not made through official party accounts, and incomplete accountability documentation. BPK explicitly noted in its IHPS I 2023 document that banparpol utilization was not prioritized for political education of party members and the public, the primary mandate of the regulations (BPK RI 2023). Of the 5,199 LPJs examined, only 73% were declared compliant with criteria.

This finding is not an isolated anomaly. Research based on BPK audit data reveals a critical structural paradox: the absence of effective sanctions for non-compliance with the political education mandate, combined with parties' tendency to prioritize operational expenditure, fundamentally weakens policy objectives (Zainudin 2026). This pattern indicates that the problem is not merely individual non-compliance but a systemic failure in policy incentive design.

4.3. Absence of Measurable Success Indicators in Digital Citizenship

Analysis of regulatory documents and party accountability reports reveals the complete absence of specific, measurable, impact-oriented key performance indicators for digital citizenship capacity. The current reporting system measures only procedural compliance: whether funds were spent, whether activities were held, and whether administrative evidence was attached. There is no evaluation mechanism measuring whether political education program participants experienced improvements in digital literacy capacity, social media ethics, or ability to verify political information.

This directly impacts the stagnation of digital citizenship. The IMDI score rising by only 0.16 points in 2024, from 43.18 to 43.34, reflects a slowdown in citizens' digital capacity growth disproportionate to the state's investments in various digital empowerment programs (Komdigi 2024). When party funds ostensibly designated for political education are not directed toward building digital competencies, national digital literacy programs lose one of their most strategic actors.

4.4. Three-Layer Structural Gap

Synthesis of the three preceding findings produces a three-layer structural gap map explaining the systemic failure of party fund allocations in advancing digital citizenship maturity. First, a regulation-relevance gap: the existing regulatory framework does not accommodate digital dimensions in the definition of political education, meaning even fully compliant parties fail to contribute to digital citizenship formation. Second, an implementation-compliance gap: BPK findings consistently show that fund utilization priorities shift from political education to operational expenditure. Third, an evaluation-impact gap: no

measurement system exists linking party political education programs to measurable digital citizenship maturity indicators.

The urgency of addressing these gaps is heightened by the fact that social media has become an effective tool for voter socialization, yet technological determinism such as political buzzers also causes the spread of hoaxes and hate narratives that directly damage digital democracy quality (Pangrazio and Sefton-Green 2021). Political parties' failure to use state assistance funds for building citizens' digital literacy and ethics is not merely an administrative matter, it constitutes a genuine democratic deficit.

4.5. Discussion: Toward Paradigm Redefinition

The findings confirm that the fundamental problem lies not in the quantity of allocated funds but in the political education paradigm used by parties as a reference framework. This represents what Mossberger and Tolbert (2021) describe as a failure of political institutions to respond to the transformation of the democratic public sphere. When the space of political deliberation has massively migrated to digital platforms, the institution responsible for political education continues operating with a pre-digital curriculum, not a mere technical lag, but an institutional unwillingness or inability to redefine its mandate.

This condition can be understood through the concept of decoupling in organizational sociology (Meyer and Rowan 1977). The phenomenon where organizations separate the formal structure displayed to the public from actual internal practices. Parties fulfill formal reporting obligations as a legitimate institutional facade while actual fund use shifts to short-term operational priorities. The absence of effective sanctions reinforces this tendency (Zainudin 2026).

This study's reformative proposition is that political education in the digital era must be redefined not merely as the socialization of constitutional values, but as a systematic investment in forming citizens who are competent, critical, and ethical in digital spaces. This redefinition requires changes at three layers simultaneously: at the regulatory layer, the operational definition of political education must be explicitly expanded to include digital citizenship dimensions; at the accountability layer, reporting systems must be supplemented with measurable impact indicators; and at the incentive layer, mechanisms must be designed that genuinely motivate parties to prioritize digital citizenship-based programs.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1. Conclusions

This study suggests, based on the documents and reports analyzed, that political party fund allocations have not meaningfully contributed to digital citizenship formation, and this pattern appears structural rather than incidental, within the scope of the data examined. Three primary conclusions emerge:

First, the failure originates from a paradigmatic void. Regulations governing party fund use define political education in a conventional framework that does not touch on digital citizenship dimensions whatsoever, meaning even fully compliant parties contribute nothing to digital citizenship formation.

Second, the failure is compounded by an accountability paradox. The existing reporting system measures only procedural compliance without a single indicator measuring the substantive impact on citizens' digital capacity.

Third, this failure carries real democratic consequences. The absence of party contributions to digital citizenship formation points to a potential democratic competence deficit worth further attention, particularly given the explosive growth of digital political spaces in Indonesia.

Theoretically, this study contributes a new analytical framework that brings together two hitherto parallel streams of literature, party funding governance and digital citizenship, demonstrating that they are fundamentally connected through the question of democratic quality in the digital era.

5.2. Recommendations

First, for the Ministry of Home Affairs and the House of Representatives: PP No. 1 of 2018 and Law No. 2 of 2011 should be amended to explicitly include digital citizenship dimensions as mandatory components in the operational definition of political education. Specifically, the amended definition should require party political education programs to address, at minimum, the four dimensions identified by Choi (2016): (a) digital ethics, to build norms of responsible online conduct, given the scale of negative content circulating in Indonesia's digital space; (b) media and information literacy, to strengthen citizens' ability to evaluate the credibility of political information; (c) critical resistance, to equip citizens to recognize and resist disinformation and manipulative digital political content; and (d) participation and engagement, to encourage constructive civic activity in digital political spaces. Each dimension is justified by the corresponding deficits this study identifies in current party-funded programs, which presently address only the participation dimension while leaving the other three unaddressed.

Second, for the BPK and Ministry of Home Affairs: transform the evaluation system from procedural compliance toward impact-based accountability by adding measurable indicators reflecting improvements in participants' digital citizenship capacity.

Third, for Political Parties: proactively initiate digital citizenship-based political education programs, including partnerships with digital literacy institutions and universities, using digital platforms not only as campaign channels but also as civic education media.

Fourth, for future researchers: recommended research agendas include cross-party comparative studies, survey-based research among party political education program participants, and international comparative studies examining best practices from democracies that have successfully integrated digital citizenship into party funding mechanisms.

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