

# Strengthening Democracy through Campus: The Influence of Education on Student Political Participation

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## Abstract

This study investigates the impact of democratic education on student engagement in Indonesia's 2024 General Elections. Using a quantitative survey design, data were collected from 250 students across five universities to examine their understanding of democratic concepts, perceptions of democratic education, and political participation. The findings indicate a moderate positive correlation ( $r = 0.412$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) between democratic education and political engagement. While students exhibit strong foundational knowledge of democracy, their procedural understanding—such as knowledge of institutional mechanisms and electoral processes—remains limited. The study highlights the need for higher education institutions to adopt application-based approaches to democratic education, including electoral simulations, public debates, and advocacy training, to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical skills. By fostering informed and active political participation, such programs hold the potential to strengthen democratic resilience in Indonesia and other developing democracies. This research contributes to the global discourse on democratic education by providing empirical evidence from a developing country context. Future research should integrate qualitative methods and explore the role of social and institutional factors in shaping political engagement for a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics between education and democracy.

## Keywords

Democratic Education; Higher Education Policy; Indonesian General Election; Political Participation; Student Engagement

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Democracy education has a fundamental role in shaping student political involvement, especially in elections. As a key pillar of a democratic system, education equips students with the knowledge and skills necessary to participate critically in the political process as well as exercise their civic responsibilities (Fennell & Simpson, 2008; Oktavianingrum et al., 2024; Streitwieser et al., 2019) In Indonesia, the 2024 election is a strategic momentum to evaluate the impact of democracy education on student participation in determining the direction of the nation's democracy. Democracy education not only functions as a tool for knowledge transfer but also as a means of social transformation that can foster collective awareness of the importance of democratic sustainability (Suherlan, 2023; Zhong, 2021).

Although Indonesia has a rich history of democracy, challenges are still faced in translating



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democratic principles into active civic engagement among the younger generation (Amin & Ritonga, 2024; Prakoso et al., 2024; Tresiana et al., 2023). Previous research has revealed structural and cultural barriers that hinder democratic participation, such as limited access to political education and a lack of procedural understanding of democratic mechanisms (Gaffar, 1999; Oktavianingrum et al., 2024). Therefore, strengthening democracy education in higher education is urgently needed to bridge the gap between theoretical understanding and its application in real life. This effort is also an important foundation in increasing the political participation of the younger generation, who are often considered less contributing to the political process.

Globally, democracy education has proven to be a catalyst in improving civic competence and political participation (Civaner, 2008; Eidhof & de Ruyter, 2022). However, the effectiveness of democratic education programs in developing countries that face unique socio-political challenges is still not widely explored. This study aims to fill the research gap by analyzing the relationship between democracy education and student participation in the 2024 elections. Indonesia, as a developing democracy, offers valuable context for understanding how democracy education can increase political awareness and youth voter engagement, especially in conditions where institutional support for democracy is still growing (Anjarsari, 2023; Saud & Margono, 2021; Timidi & Okuro, 2024). The findings of this study are expected to provide strategic insights for other developing countries in strengthening civic engagement through education.

To provide a comprehensive understanding, this study integrates two main dimensions: democracy education as an independent variable, which includes curriculum, teaching methods, and institutional policies, and student engagement as a dependent variable, which is measured through the level of participation and understanding of the democratic process. This integration aims to explain the causal relationship between variables and offer evidence-based recommendations for designing more effective democratic education programs (Glaser et al., 2021; Mohamed & Kulmie, 2023; Oktavianingrum et al., 2024). Thus, this research is expected to contribute positively to developing higher education in Indonesia. Furthermore, the results of this research are also expected to be a guideline for policymakers and educators in optimizing democracy education to produce a generation that is more politically aware and active in democratic participation. By strengthening the foundation of democratic education, Indonesia can prepare students to face the challenges of future democracy in a more resilient and adaptive manner.

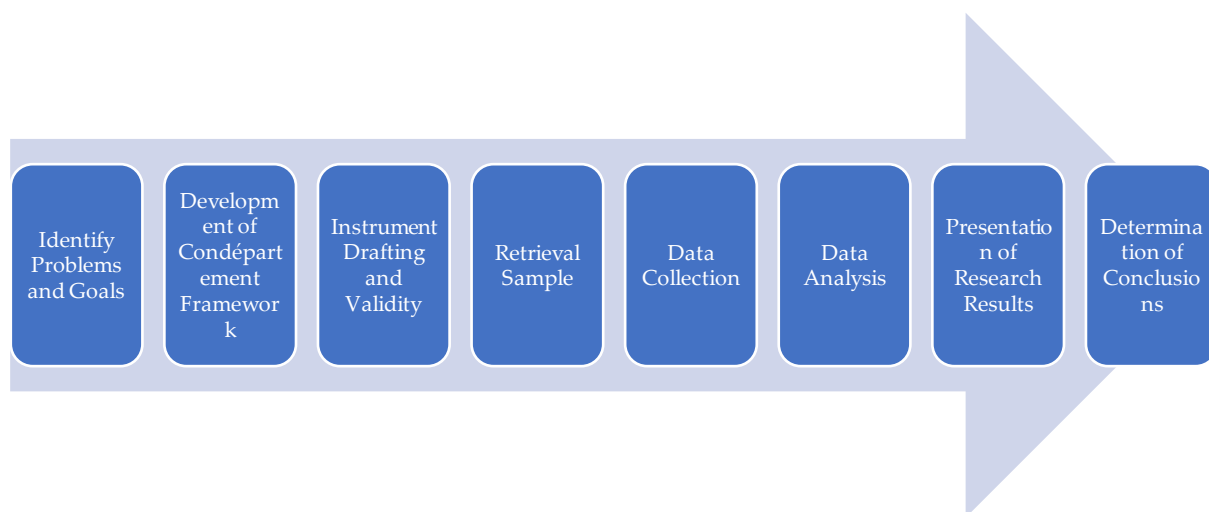
## 2. METHODS

This study uses a quantitative approach with a survey design to analyze the influence of democratic education on student involvement in the 2024 elections. Ethical approval was obtained from the institutional review board of the University of Muhammadiyah Purwokerto. Participant anonymity and confidentiality are ensured during the data collection process. The quantitative approach was chosen because of its ability to measure correlations and causal relationships between variables in large samples, providing statistically generalizable findings (Boehm & Zhou, 2022; Mohajan, 2020). This research procedure begins with identifying problems and determining research objectives, the basis for formulating a conceptual framework. This conceptual framework integrates two main variables, namely democracy education as an independent variable and the level of student involvement in the 2024 election (Desiriah & Setyarsih, 2021; Streitwieser et al., 2019; Torney-Purta et al., 2015) As a dependent variable.

After that, the next stage is the development of survey instruments. This instrument is designed to measure three main aspects: students' understanding of democracy, their perception of democracy education, and their level of participation in elections. This study involved 250 students from five universities in Indonesia who were selected using the stratified random sampling method. The survey was conducted using a questionnaire consisting of 30 closed questions and five open questions. To

ensure reliability, the survey instrument was tested using Cronbach's Alpha method, which showed a value of 0.87, which means it was highly reliable. The validity of the instrument was tested through expert validation and exploratory factor analysis, which showed the consistency of the indicator with the measured variable (Baistaman et al., 2020; Ehido et al., 2020; Saeed et al., 2022).

The survey instruments that have been designed are then validated to ensure their reliability and validity. The sampling process was carried out using the stratified random sampling method to ensure that the research sample reflects the student population from various study programs and universities (Mweshi & Sakyi, 2020; Rahman et al., 2022). The research sample includes students from various study programs (social sciences, engineering, health, and economics) with proportions that reflect the student population at their respective universities. The selection of the sample also considers demographic factors such as gender, age, and geographical location to ensure that the results of the study can reflect the diversity of the student population in Indonesia. Furthermore, the survey is distributed online and offline to selected respondents, and the collected data is stored for the analysis stage. Figure 1 is an overview of the visualization of systematic research stages in the flow of research implementation.



**Figure 1.** Research concept map

The collected data is then analyzed at the data analysis stage using statistical software such as SPSS or R. This analysis includes descriptive statistics to understand data patterns as well as inferential statistics to test the relationship between research variables (Gonaygunta et al., 2023; Selvan & Balasundaram, 2021). The data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 25 software, citing its ability to efficiently conduct regression and correlation analysis. A simple linear regression test was used to identify the influence of democracy education on student engagement, while the Pearson correlation test evaluated the relationship between the main variables in the study (Chaudhary, 2022; Kiess, 2022). After the data analysis is completed, the research results are compiled and presented in the presentation stage of the research results. At this stage, the research results are interpreted to answer research questions and provide new insights into democracy education and political participation. Finally, the study concludes with the determination of conclusions, in which conclusions are formulated based on the research results, including theoretical and practical implications and recommendations for developing more effective democratic education programs or further research.

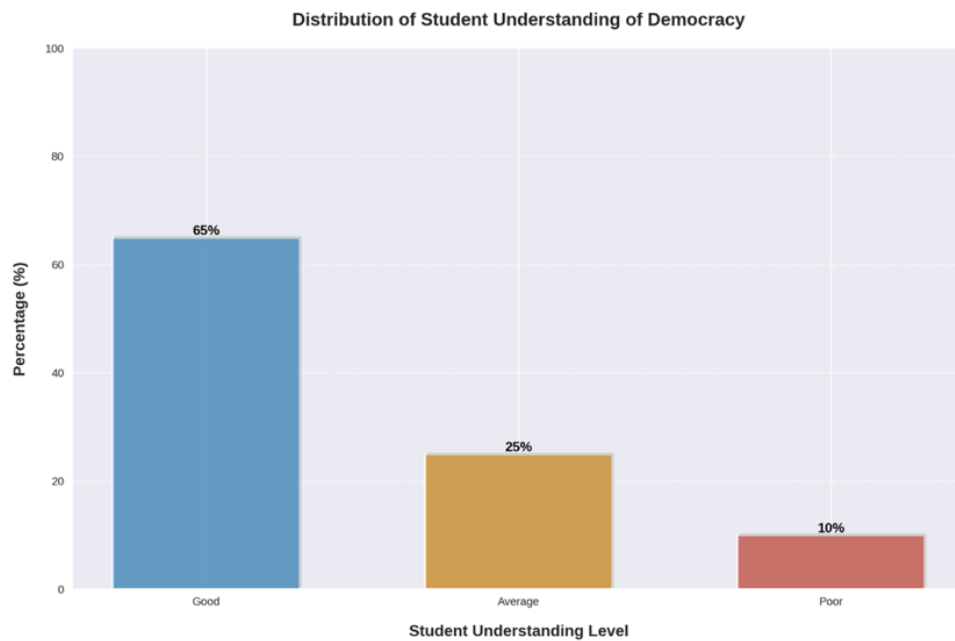
### 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section presents the main findings of the research on the influence of democratic education on student involvement in the 2024 elections. These findings are categorized based on the formulation of research problems, which include students' understanding of democracy, the influence of democracy

education on political engagement, and the correlation between democracy education and the level of student involvement (Akar & Kara, 2020; Teegelbeckers et al., 2023). Based on data analysis, the study's results provide in-depth insights into how democracy education can function as a catalyst in increasing the political participation of the younger generation. In addition, the discussion in this section also includes the interpretation of the results supported by previous theories and research to provide a strong empirical foundation to support the development of democratic education programs in higher education.

**Student Understanding of the Concept of Democracy and Political Processes Related to the 2024 Election**

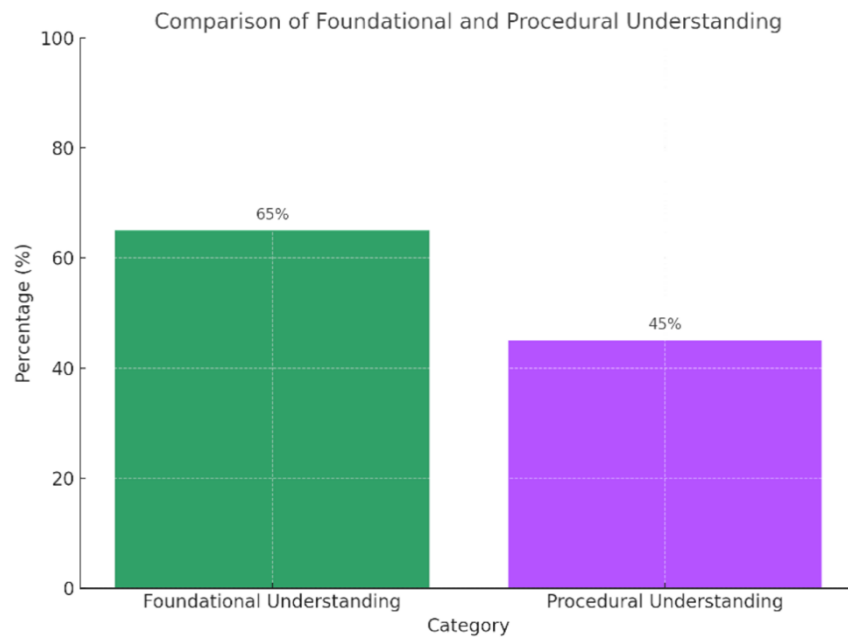
Students' understanding of the concept of democracy and political processes is a fundamental aspect of building active political involvement (Holbein et al., 2020; Suherlan, 2023) Democracy not only involves voting rights but also includes a deep understanding of the basic principles of democracy, such as freedom, justice, and political participation (Freeman, 2020; Polizzi, 2020) In the context of the 2024 election in Indonesia, students are expected to have enough insight to understand their role as voters and agents of social change. This study analyzes the level of students' understanding of democracy conceptually and procedurally, which is measured through a survey focusing on two main dimensions: the basic principles of democracy and the technical aspects of the political process. For this, the following visualization illustrates the results of a survey of students regarding their understanding of democracy.



**Figure 2.** Level of Understanding of Student Democracy

The circle graph above shows the distribution of students' understanding of democracy. Most students, i.e., 65%, have a good level of understanding. The group with a sufficient level of understanding included 25% of respondents, while only 10% of students had a low level of understanding. These results show that democratic education in higher education has provided a fairly strong foundation for understanding the concept of democracy. However, there is still room to improve students' understanding of sufficient and insufficient categories. In this case, Figure 3 is the result of comparing students' level of understanding of the two main dimensions of democracy: basic concepts and procedural aspects (Droubi et al., 2022; Zagrebina, 2020). Understanding of the basic concepts of democracy, such as freedom, justice, and political participation, was recorded at 65%. Meanwhile, the understanding of procedural aspects of democracy, such as the check and balance mechanism and the

state's institutional functions, only reached 45%.



**Figure 3.** Comparison of Basic Understanding and Procedures of Democracy

The bar chart in Figure 3 illustrates the difference in students' understanding of basic (65%) and procedural (45%) democracy. While students demonstrate a strong understanding of democratic principles, their understanding of procedural aspects, such as institutional mechanisms and political processes, remains limited. This gap highlights the need for practical educational strategies to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and applied democracy (Deisenrieder et al., 2020; Resch & Schritteser, 2023). The results of this comparison indicate that there is a significant gap between conceptual and technical understanding. Students understand the basic principles of democracy better than their technical application. This highlights the need for a more applicable approach to democracy education, such as election simulations and policy discussions, to increase understanding of procedural aspects (Helbing et al., 2023; Kiess, 2022). Thus, students can be better prepared to participate in complex political processes actively, not only understanding the ideas of democracy but also how to apply them in real life.

***The Influence of Student Perception and Understanding on Democracy***

One of the main objectives of this study is to measure the influence of democratic education on student involvement in the 2024 elections. To test this relationship, a simple linear regression analysis was used (Jenkins & Quintana-Ascencio, 2020; Maulud & Abdulazeez, 2020). The results of the ANOVA test and the coefficient table show how significant the influence of democratic education is on student involvement in the context of the democratic political process. For this, Table 1 shows the results of the ANOVA test, which evaluates the significance of the regression model:

**Table 1.** Significance of regression models:

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	98.186	1	98.186	20.250	.000 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	480.031	99	4.849		
Total	578.218	100			

The significance value (Sig.) of 0.000 is less than 0.05, indicating that the whole regression model is significant. This means that there is a significant influence of democracy education on student

involvement in the 2024 election.

**Table 2.** Estimation parameters of the regression model

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig
(Constant)	12.131	1.834		6.613	.000
Pendidikan Demokrasi	.450	.100	.412	4.500	.000

The constant value of 12,131 indicates that if democracy education has a value of zero, then student involvement in the election will be at the basic level of 12,131. The value of the variable coefficient of democracy education is 0.450, which means that every increase of one unit in democracy education will increase student involvement by 0.450 units. The Sig. value for the democracy education variable of 0.000 ( $< 0.05$ ) shows that the influence of democracy education on student involvement is statistically significant.

This analysis shows that democratic education positively and significantly influences student involvement in the 2024 elections. This can be seen from the F value of 20,250 (Sig. = 0.000) in the ANOVA table, which indicates that the regression model can explain the relationship between democratic education and student engagement. In addition, a Beta value of 0.412 in the Coefficients table shows that democratic education contributes moderately to student engagement. For this, it is important to note the value of t (4.500) and Sig. (0.000) the alternative hypothesis ( $H_a$ ) is accepted, while the null hypothesis ( $H_o$ ) is rejected. In other words, democratic education significantly influences student involvement in the 2024 elections. Nonetheless, this moderate correlation indicates that democratic education is not the only factor influencing political engagement (Willeck & Mendelberg, 2022). External factors, such as the social environment and access to information, may also play an important role (Saud & Margono, 2021).

These findings emphasize the importance of democracy education in shaping student political involvement. Democracy education not only functions as a medium for knowledge transfer but also as a tool to increase student's awareness and active participation in the political process (Prigent, 2019; Timidi & Okuro, 2024). The positive coefficient value (0.450) shows that any improvement in the quality of democracy education in higher education can significantly increase student involvement in the election. However, these results also point to a challenge that needs to be overcome, namely ensuring that democratic education is not only theoretical but also applicable (Teegelbeckers et al., 2023; Velasco et al., 2023). Educational institutions must provide a platform allowing students to practice democratic principles, such as election simulations, policy discussions, and political advocacy. Thus, the effect of democratic education on student involvement can be strengthened, thereby supporting the development of a more participatory and inclusive democracy.

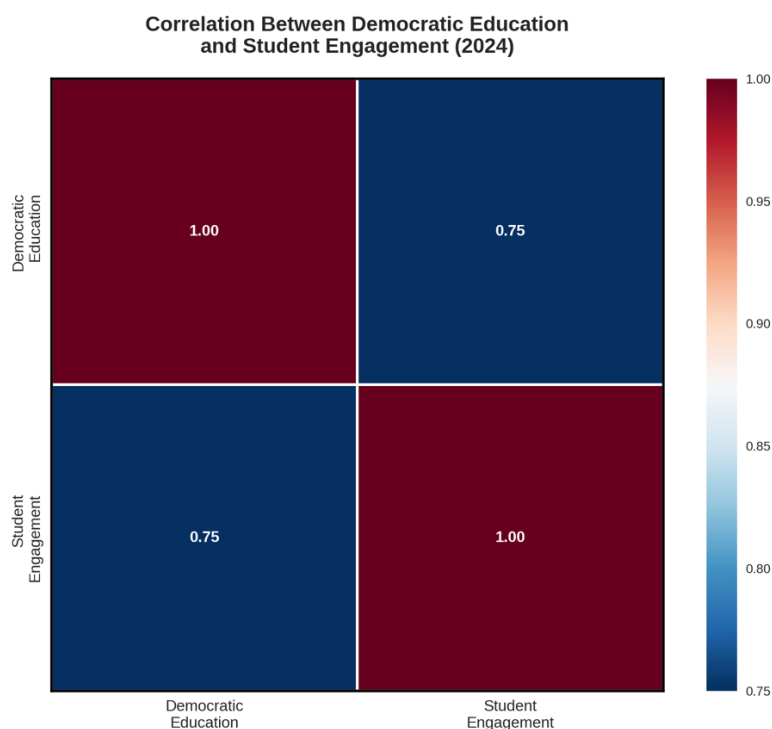
***Correlation between Democracy Education and Student Involvement in the 2024 Election***

Hubungan antara pendidikan demokrasi dan keterlibatan mahasiswa dalam Pemilu 2024 merupakan aspek penting yang perlu dianalisis untuk memahami sejauh mana pendidikan dapat memengaruhi partisipasi politik (Phillips, 2014; Saud & Margono, 2021). Uji korelasi digunakan untuk mengidentifikasi tingkat hubungan antara kedua variabel ini, yakni pendidikan demokrasi sebagai variabel independen (X) dan keterlibatan mahasiswa dalam Pemilu sebagai variabel dependen (Y). Hasil uji korelasi Pearson memberikan gambaran tentang kekuatan dan arah hubungan antarvariabel, sebagaimana tabel 3.

**Table 3.** Correlation between Democracy Education and Student Involvement in the 2024 Election

Variable	Democracy Education	Student Involvement in the 2024 Election
Democracy Education	1.000	0.412**
Student Involvement in Elections	0.412**	1.000
Significance (2-tailed)	-	0.000
Number of Samples (N)	101	101

The results of the Pearson correlation test showed a correlation value of **0.412** with a significance level of 0.000 (< 0.05). This shows a significant positive relationship between democracy education and student involvement in the 2024 elections. This positive relationship means that the higher the quality or intensity of democratic education students receive, the greater their involvement in the electoral process (Droubi et al., 2022; Willeck & Mendelberg, 2022). In addition, a correlation coefficient value of 0.412 indicates a moderate relationship according to the interpretation classification of Pearson's correlation value. Thus, democratic education strongly influences student involvement in political contexts, especially elections (Freeman, 2020; Gollust & Rahn, 2015). This is visualized in Figure 4.



**Figure 4.** Heatmap of the correlation between Democratic Education and Student Engagement

The correlation heatmap in Figure 4 illustrates the relationship between two main variables in this study, namely **Democratic Education** and **Student Involvement in the 2024 Election**. This result comes from the Pearson correlation test, which produces a value of **r = 0.412** with a significance level of **p < 0.001**. The results of Pearson's correlation show a positive relationship between Democratic Education and Student Involvement in the 2024 Election with a value of **r = 0.412** and **p < 0.001**. This confirms that democratic education has an important role in increasing students' political involvement, even if the relationship is moderate (Mohamed & Kulmie, 2023; Prakoso et al., 2024). For this, Here is a Penjelsa screenshot of the heatmap visualization:

**a. Moderate Positive Relationship**

The intense color on the box showing the correlation between Democracy Education and Student Engagement indicates a moderately positive relationship. The value of  $r = 0.412$  indicates that the improvement in the quality or intensity of democratic education is significantly correlated with increased student political involvement. In other words, the better the democracy education program that students receive, the higher the likelihood that they will actively participate in elections (Sampaio de Oliveira & Leite, 2007).

**b. Automatic Relationship to Self Variables**

The diagonal box (correlation 1,000) reflects the automatic relationship between the variable and itself, which is the default element in the correlation matrix.

**c. Statistical Interpretation**

A significance value of  $p < 0.001$  indicates that this relationship is not a statistical coincidence but has a strong empirical basis. Thus, we can conclude that democratic education has a real contribution to student involvement in elections (Mohamed & Kulmie, 2023).

**d. Research Context**

This relationship provides empirical support for the assumption that democratic education not only provides theoretical knowledge to students but also motivates them to be actively involved in the political process (Kiess, 2022). This moderate relationship also shows that while democratic education is important, other factors influence students' political involvement, such as social environment, personal experience, or access to political information.

**e. Practical Implications**

This heatmap provides a visual justification for policymakers and educators to increase their focus on democratic education programs (Pilati & Filho, 2019). Higher education institutions can encourage student involvement in politics more effectively by improving curricula, teaching methods, and practice-based activities (e.g., election simulations or public discussions).

Democracy education is not only instilling conceptual understanding, but also forming deep political awareness and the drive to act. Without a progressive and adaptive approach, democratic education risks becoming an empty discourse that loses its relevance to the socio-political reality of students. Therefore, universities must create an academic ecosystem that allows students to experience democracy in real life through policy simulations, deliberative forums, and campus-based advocacy (Deer & Trickey, 2020; Fennell & Simpson, 2008; Glaser et al., 2021). It is not enough to just teach theory, educational institutions must emphasize experiential learning, such as interaction with policymakers, involvement in social advocacy, and exposure to political dynamics. Substantial democracy must be lived through active and reflective participation, not simply understood as an abstract concept. Participatory infrastructure, such as debate clubs, academic journals, and collaborations with non-governmental organizations, is important in building a critical and empowered generation of voters. The campus must be an open discussion space that forms analytical thinking, hones sensitivity to social justice, and instills civic values that are oriented toward the public (Akar & Kara, 2020; Oktavianingrum et al., 2024). Students must be trained to examine problems from various perspectives to formulate inclusive and contextual solutions. If democracy is only taught as a theory, students will lose their ability to reflect on the politics they face daily. Therefore, educational institutions must continue to update their learning methods to remain relevant and produce caring, responsible, and ready citizens to contribute to the nation's progress.

More than just producing smart voters, democracy education must build a collective consciousness that encourages active participation in social and political life. With critical thinking skills, students will



be able to distinguish between valid information and misleading propaganda and understand that democracy is not only about elections but also about transparency and public involvement in decision-making. A good democratic education must instill the courage to speak out, sensitivity to injustice, and the ability to negotiate in the public sphere (Streitwieser et al., 2019; Torney-Purta et al., 2015). Therefore, universities must be places where students can test ideas, question the status quo, and practice becoming leaders with integrity. Participation in campus organizations, involvement in policy discussions, and hands-on experience in social advocacy will shape a more solution-oriented and public-interest-oriented mindset. A healthy democracy depends not only on written rules but also on the active participation of citizens in upholding justice and transparency. If students are not encouraged to think independently and dare to act, they will become a passive generation in democratic life. Therefore, democratic education must be directed at forming character, political ethics, and the ability to design and implement solutions to social problems (Oktavianingrum et al., 2024). Thus, democracy is a concept taught and a life principle embodied in concrete actions to build a more just and sustainable society.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study reveals that democracy education positively and significantly influences student involvement in the 2024 elections. Regression and correlation analysis found that the higher the democratic education students receive, the greater their involvement in the political process. The results of the ANOVA test show that the regression model has high significance (Sig. = 0.000), while the Pearson correlation coefficient value of 0.412 shows a moderate positive relationship between democracy education and student engagement. The study also found that although students understand the basic concepts of democracy, their understanding of procedural aspects and political involvement still requires significant improvement. To that end, universities must integrate practical activities, such as advocacy training and policy discussions, into their curricula to bridge the gap between theoretical and procedural democratic knowledge.

The implications of this study suggest that higher education institutions need to adopt more applicable strategies to increase student understanding and engagement in democracy. Election simulations, public debates, and advocacy programs can be effective steps to strengthen the influence of democratic education. Policymakers should support these initiatives by providing resources and incentivizing civic education programs across higher education institutions. However, this study has some limitations, such as limited sample coverage at some universities and a quantitative approach that has not fully explored the qualitative aspects of student engagement. Therefore, conducting follow-up research with a mixed-methods approach and involving a wider sample is recommended to gain more comprehensive insights. In addition, future research may also explore other factors, such as the influence of the social environment and media, which also influence student political engagement.

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