Positive narratives against the destructive behavior of novice voters on social media

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Abstract

Direct elections do not always run well. The aggressiveness of political partisans, who are sometimes hostile – swearing and verbally blaspheming one another on social media – during the campaign triggers a wider public conflict. Teenagers play an active role as novice voters in elections, yet verbal aggression of social conflicts on social media is prone to occur. This study is a multi-year research. In the first year, it mapped down the verbal aggression tendencies of young voters in Indonesia using literature and explanatory studies. It examined the theory and identified factors inducing polite behaviors. It was conducted in several areas around East Java for 6 months. The respondents in this study comprised 500 novice voters from designated provinces, with 100 samples from each. This quantitative research instrument involved verbal aggression, positive thinking, and positive communication as instruments analyzed and measured according to compatible measuring instruments. The study results indicated that teenagers who make the most of logic and common sense in thinking are not susceptible, especially to things that don't make sense. Logic teenagers prefer to ignore bad thoughts. Consequently, they hold a high sense of empathy once communicating, are calm, and tough to be emotionally provoked.

INTRODUCTION

Hate speech on social media networks is undeniably increasing (Ash-Shidiq & Pratama, 2021; Santos et al., 2020; Santos et al., 2020; Umroh, 2019; Raja Hassan & Rahmatullah, 2022). During the pandemic, the use of social media was growing rapidly(Harahap & Susri Adeni, 2020). Undoubtedly, the increase exerted a prolonged social and psychological impact on every generation(Balhara et al., 2018). One of the generations that actively engage on social media is the adolescent. A study reported that verbal aggression can occur in teenagers, and self-control affects their verbal aggression(Lansford, 2018; Oktaviani & Ningsih, 2021; Riggs et al., 2000). Self-control has a positive correlation with adolescent's tendency to verbal aggression(Auliya & Nurwidawati, 2014). As a consequence, the lower self-control the adolescent has, the higher their tendency to verbal aggression is, and vice versa (Badriyah, 2018).

In the political constellation, it is particularly concerned that verbal aggression and dynamic self-control in teenagers might occur in the time of electoral politics. Meanwhile, the Directorate General of Population and Civil Registry of the Ministry of Home Affairs has predicted the data on the potential population of electoral voters (known as DP4) in 2024 to reach 206 million people (Department of Population and Civil Registration, 2022). The data of KPU (General Election Commissions) show that

there are 578,139 novice voters from a total of 190 million people (Dirgantara, 2022). In this constellation, novice voters must contend with the shadow of verbal aggression on social media, which often targets individuals in their generation.

Studies on the design of verbal aggressiveness, positive thinking, and positive communication in novice voters have so far tended to detect several problems. First, verbal aggressiveness is associated with fanaticism and aggressive behavior in the realm of social media(Febriany et al., 2022). Second, verbal aggressiveness in social media is related to physiological mechanisms in the brain, which are related to personality and self-control(Fajar, 2020). Third, verbal aggressiveness is related to the subject's background issues, such as a discordant family environment, a lack of attention from both parents, poor modeling, and revenge motivation(Yanizon & Sesriani, 2019). Of the three tendencies, the research that identifies the design of polite behavior as an answer to verbal aggressiveness in the context of political contestation for novice voters has not been conducted yet. In fact, novice voters in social media have a big role in building a peaceful and non-violent vibe of electoral politics(Astrika & Yuwanto, 2019; Diana, 2021; Rizki Putra & Nurcholis, 2021), thus requiring positive thinking.

Positive thinking describes the mental attitude or mindset of approaching life's challenges and opportunities with optimism, hope, and a constructive perspective. It emphasizes on solutions, possibilities, and positive outcomes. Positive communication is the use of language, gestures, and non-verbal cues that promote understanding, empathy, and a sense of well-being in interpersonal interactions. It allows individuals to communicate respectfully that leaves supports and positive relationships. Positive communication leads to polite behavior, which promotes kindness, respect, and etiquette in social interactions, with the use of the term 'please', 'thank you', and 'excuse me', and respectful gestures (Afifah kamilah & Abdullah, 2022; Machmudati & Diana, 2017; Melhe et al., 2021; Na'imah et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2017).

Therefore, this article aims to accommodate the perspectives of political and social psychology upon exposing the identification of the psychic patterns of novice voters, especially those related to the character building of the Indonesian generation, which is early promoted to novice voters in political participation. Three hypotheses base the current research:

H1: positive thinking and positive communication negatively affects the verbal aggression of novice voters;

H2: positive thinking affects the verbal aggression of novice voters;

H3: positive communication affects the verbal aggression of novice voters;

The answers to the hypotheses allow in-depth knowledge of positive thinking and positive communication to reduce verbal aggression on novice voters that political participation in electoral democracy rises. This knowledge can broaden the views in the domain of social media policy, anti-hate speech campaigns, and polite and civilized political practices.

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach. The research population was derived from the voter list summary in May 2022 provided by the Provincial General Election Commission of East Java, with a total of 6,255 novice voters. The sample size in this research was grounded to the concept developed by Isaac and Michael, with a selected margin of error of 5%, a common choice in social science research. Referring to the sample size table for a 5% margin of error out of the 6,000 total population, the sample size used in this study was 329 young voters in East Java. The research was conducted over a span of six months in different areas within East Java. It adopted simple random sampling. It included only young first-time voters residing in East Java.

The research instruments were constructed in measurement scales designed to yield quantitative data by gauging the attitudes, opinions, and perceptions of respondents regarding the election. There were three measurement scales utilized in this study: Verbal Aggression Scale, which was developed based on various forms of verbal aggression as outlined by Myers(Sarwono, 2012), encompassing aspects such as using harsh language, shouting, making threats, mocking or insulting, and spreading gossip or slander; Positive Thinking Scale, developed under the perspectives of Endraswara, Suardi (2016), and Yanuar (2011), with three key aspects - responsibility, reality, and right; Positive Communication Scale, organized based on the insights of Rahmadhani (2008), which comprises empathy, responsiveness, positive messaging, openness, mutual trust, active listening, optimism, proportionality, and refraining from judgment toward others. In this study, the data were collected by distributing questionnaires under Likert's scale.

The validity of the measurement scale was assessed through a discrimination test by examining the corrected item-total correlation index. If the value of the corrected item-total correlation index for an item was less than 0.300, the item was considered invalid or unsuitable. However, if the value of the corrected item-total correlation index for an item exceeded 0.300, the item was valid. The reliability test was carried out by employing the Cronbach's Alpha formula, which involved computing the alpha coefficient. Data was considered reliable if α (alpha) was positive and α (alpha) > the critical value α (alpha) from the table. The test results were verified using a two-tailed test at a significance level of 0.05. Alternatively, the reliability could also be assessed using specific threshold values, for instance, a value below 0.6 was considered to have lower reliability, while 0.7 was acceptable, and 0.8 was considered good. The foundation for assessing the relationship between positive thinking, positive communication, and verbal aggression is significance values through correlation tests and multiple regression analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The verbal aggression scale initially contained 20 items. However, after the three-round validity test, 18 items were valid with an item discrimination coefficient or index corrected total item correlation from 0.314 to 0.592. The first round eliminated 1 item, item no. 2. The second round also found 1 invalid item, item no. 3. The third round did not find any invalid item. Therefore, the discrimination test was carried out 3 rounds only. The results of validity test of the aggressiveness scale are listed in the following tables:

Table 1. Blueprint of Verbal Aggression

No.	Indicator	Item		Number of Items
		F	**UF**	
1	Saying Harsh Words	1.10	2.12	4
2	Shouting	11.13	3.14	4
3	Threatening	4.15	5.16	4
4	Mocking/Cursing	6.17	7.18	4
5	Spreading Gossip/Defamation	8.19	9.20	4
	Number of Items			**20**

Table 2. Verbal Aggression Item Validity Test Results

No.	Indicator	Item		Number of Items
		F	**UF**	
1	Saying Harsh Words	1.10	12	3
2	Shouting	11.13	14	3
3	Threatening	4.15	5.16	4
4	Mocking/Cursing	6.17	7.18	4
5	Spreading Gossip/Defamation	8.19	9.20	4
	Number of Items			**18**

Validity test for aggressiveness scale item was carried out with item discrimination test using IBM SPSS version 20.0 for Windows program. It has a limitation to correct and define the valid items with corrected item-total correlation index. If the corrected item-total correlation index value is < 0.300, the item is invalid. However, if the corrected item-total correlation index value is > 0.300, the item is satisfactorily valid. The positive thinking scale reached 40 items initially, yet when conducted validity test in 3 rounds, 24 valid items were obtained with the item discrimination coefficient or corrected total correlation item index moving from 0.320 to 0.621. In the first round, 14 invalid items were obtained, item no. 2, 3, 6, 10, 12, 13, 19, 20, 21, 23, 25, 26, 33 and 34. In the second round, 2 items were invalid, which were item no. 1 and 14. In the third round, no items were found invalid, so the discrimination test was carried out in 3 rounds only. The results of the validity test of positive thinking scale are provided in the following table.

Table 3. Blueprint of Verbal Aggression

No.	Aspect	Indicator	Item*		Number of Items
			F	**UF**	
1	*Responsibility*	Viewing problems as challenges	1.21	2.22	4
		Open-minded to receive suggestions and ideas	3.23	4.24	4
		Not making excuses but having to act	5.25	6.26	4
2	*Reality*	Enjoying life sincerely	7.27	8.28	4
		Putting aside negative thoughts	9.29	10.30	4
		Being grateful for what belongs	11.31	12.32	4
		Being ignorant to indefinite gossip	13.33	14.34	4
3	*Right*	Using positive language	15.35	16.36	4
		Using positive body language	17.37	18.38	4
		Caring about self-image	19.39	20.40	4
		Number of Items			**40**

*: No. Item

Table 4. Verbal Aggression Item Validity Test Results

No.	Aspect	Indicator	Item		Number of Items
			F	**UF**	
1	*Responsibility*	Viewing problems as challenges	-	22	1
		Open-minded to receive suggestions and ideas	-	4.24	2
		Making no excuses but having to act	5	-	1
2	*Reality*	Enjoying life sincerely	7.27	8.28	4
		Putting aside negative thoughts	9.29	30	3
		Being grateful for what belongs	11.31	-	3
		Being ignorant to indefinite gossip	-	32	1
3	*Right*	Using positive language	15.35	16.36	4
		Using positive body language	17.37	18.38	4
		Caring about self-image	39	-	1
		Number of Items			**24**

The results of positive thinking scale initially showed 32 items, yet after the validity test in 4 rounds, 22 valid items were obtained with the item discrimination coefficient or index corrected total item correlation moving from 0.321 to 0.581. In the first round, 10 items were found invalid, which were no. 4, 8, 10, 14, 18, 19, 24, 29, 31 and 32. In the second round, 4 items were found invalid, no. 6, 12, 28 and 30. In the third round, 1 item was invalid, which was item no. 2. Finally, in round 4, no items were invalid, so the discrimination test was carried out through in 4 rounds. The results of validity test of the aggressiveness scale are provided in table 5.

Table 5. The Blueprint of Positive Communication

No.	Indicator	Item*		Number of Items
		F	UF	
1	Empathy	1.17	2.18	4
2	Responsive	3.19	4.20	4
3	Positive message	5.21	6.22	4
4	Being open and trusting each other	7.23	8.24	4
5	Actively listening	9.25	10.26	4
6	Optimistic	11.27	12.28	4
7	Proportional	13.29	14.30	4
8	Non-judgmental	15.31	16.32	4
	Number of Items			**32**

*: No. Item

Table 6. Validity Test Results of Positive Communicating Items

No.	Indicator	Item		Number of Items
		F	UF	
1	Empathy	1,17	-	2
2	Responsive	3	20	2
3	Positive message	5,21	22	3
4	Being open and trusting each other	7,23	-	2
5	Actively listening	9,25	26	3
6	Optimistic	11,27	-	2
7	Proportional	13	14	2
8	Non-judgmental	15	16	2
	Number of Items			**22**

*: No. Item

The result of reliability test of verbal aggression scale is 0.820, which defines that the verbal aggression scale has a perfect reliability value. The result of reliability test of positive thinking scale is 0.878, which means that the positive thinking scale has a perfect reliability value. The reliability test of positive communication scale resulted in 0.860, meaning that the verbal aggression scale has a perfect reliability value (very high). See table 7.

Table 7. Reliability Scale

Variables	Cronbach's alpha	N of Items
Verbal Aggression	0.820	18
Positive thinking	0.878	24
Positive Communication	0.860	18

The researchers used SPSS program version 25.0 for Windows. The data are deemed normal if the significant value is over 0.05 (p>0,05). On the other hand, if the significant value is below 0.05 (p<0.05), the data are abnormal, as presented in table 8.

Table 8. Kolmogrov-Smirnov Normality Test Results

	Kolmogrov-Smirnov	
	Statistics	**Sig.**
Unstandardized Residual	0.042	0.059

Table 13 shows that the value of Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) Kolmogorov-Smirnov from the residual histogram is 0,200 > 0,05, which means that the data in the study are normally distributed. Linearity test was carried out using analysis of variance on the regression line which resulted in the F_{count} price. The F price obtained was then consulted using the F_{table} price at a significant level of 5%. If the F_{count} price is smaller or equal to F_{table} at a significant level of 5%, the relationship among independent variables is linear. Conversely, if F_{count} is greater than F_{table}, the relationship of the independent variable with the dependent variable is not linear. The basis for determining whether certain data are linear is considering the significance value. If the significance value of linearity is below 0.05 ($p < 0.05$) and the significance value of deviation from linearity is over 0.05 ($p>0.05$), the data are said to be linear. To facilitate the linearity test (see table 9), the researchers used SPSS program version 25.0 for Windows.

Table 9. Linearity Test Results

Variables	**F**	*Sig.*	**Description**
Positive Thinking – Verbal Aggression	1.750	0.268	Linear
positive communication – Verbal Aggression	1.584	0.418	Linear

The results of the linearity test of the relationship between variables using Compare Means with Statistical Product and Service Solution (SPSS) program version 25.00 showed a Deviation From Linearity score of F = 1.750 with a significance of p = 0.268 > 0.05. It concluded that the relationship between positive thinking and verbal aggression is linear. Likewise, the Deviation From Linearity score is F = 1.584 with a significance of p = 0.418 > 0.05. Therefore, the relationship between positive communication and verbal aggression is linear. Multicollinearity and heteroscedasticity tests were carried out by researchers as presented in table 10 and 11.

Table 10. Multicollinearity Test Results

Variables	**Tolerance**	**VIF**	**Description**
Positive Thinking, Positive Communication & Verbal Aggression	0.670	1493	No Multicollinearity occurred

Table 11. Heteroscedasticity Test Results

Variables	Sig.	Description
Positive Thinking – Verbal Aggression	0.23	No Heteroscedasticity occurred
positive Communication – Verbal Aggression	0.218	No Heteroscedasticity occurred

The hypothesis test of basic research upon examining the relationship between positive thinking and positive communication with verbal aggression is by looking at the significance value. The rule of correlation test results states that if the significance value is (p) < 0.01, there is an extremely significant correlation. Meanwhile, (p) > 0.05 means no significant correlation between the two variables. See table 12.

Table 12. Regression Analysis Test Results

Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients B	R	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	F	*Sig.*
Constant	67.530	-	-	27.671	-	0.000
Regression	-	-	-	-	105.376	0.000
Positive thinking	-0.243	-0.503	-0.329	-6.978	-	0.000
Positive Communication	-0.308	-0.308	-0.302	-6.408	-	0.000

The correlation test of multiple regression analysis between positive thinking and positive communication with verbal aggression simultaneously resulted in sig = 0.000 (p < 0.01). It defines a highly significant relationship between positive thinking and positive communication with verbal aggression. The partial results between the positive thinking variable and the verbal aggression variable showed a correlation value of -0.503 with p = 0.000 (p < 0.01), meaning that there is a very significant negative relationship between positive thinking and verbal aggression. Also, the test on the variables of positive communication and verbal aggression obtained a correlation value of -0.308 with p = 0.000 (p < 0.01). It defines a very significant negative relationship between positive communication and verbal aggression.

Table 13. Effective Donation Test Results

Variables	R Square
Simultaneous	0.314
Positive thinking	0.253
Positive communication	0.241

It shows the result of R Square = 0.314, which means that the possibility of verbal aggression of teenagers to occur is by 31.4%, which is influenced by positive thinking and positive communication, while the remaining 69.6% is influenced by other factors.

Based on the results of the assumption and prerequisite examination through the normality test, linearity test, multicollinearity test, and heteroscedasticity test, this study confirmed that the research data are normally distributed, linear, and free from symptoms of multicollinearity and heteroscedasticity.

Therefore, this study can be carried out parametrically using multiple linear regression analysis. The calculation of the correlation with simultaneous multiple analysis resulted in sig = 0.000 (p < 0.01), which indicated a highly significant relationship among positive thinking, positive communication, and verbal aggression.

Meanwhile, to figure out the direction of the relationship, a partial analysis was carried out, and it turned out that the relationship between positive thinking and verbal aggression was -0.503 with p = 0.000 (p < 0.01), indicating a very significant negative relationship. The relationship between positive communication and verbal aggression was -0.308 with p = 0.000 (p < 0.01), also indicating a very significant negative relationship. Therefore, once the teenagers hold high positive thinking and communication abilities, their verbal aggression is low. On the other hand, if they have low positive thinking and communication abilities, they show a high verbal regression.

The result of the R-Square (R2) value is 0.314, which means that positive thinking and positive communication affect the verbal aggression of novice voters (31.4%). Scholars have witnessed that hate speech occurs on various social media platforms (Paz et al., 2020; Matamoros-Fernández & Farkas, 2021). Hate speech on social media has attracted a wider audience and less rational youth (Meddaugh & Kay, 2009). Even though verbal aggression has become a culture in one place and rejected in another (Zhang et al., 2020), verbal aggression in Indonesia is hindered by politeness culture. In certain contexts, local wisdom can confront either online or offline political conflicts. However, it only occurs in a small and limited scope (Fuad, 2014).

The study results of sig 0.000 (<0.01) show that polite behavior design, which consists of positive thinking and positive communication, has a relationship with verbal aggression. Based on the results of the correlation coefficient (rx12y) -0.503 and -0.308 with sig 0.000 (<0.01), this study concludes that polite behavior design has a very significant negative relationship with verbal aggression among novice voters.

Social media has become a ring for fighting ideas among the users, a means for staging protest and expressing ideological and political affiliations, even to the instance of using hate speech (Kaufhold & Reuter, 2019). As a realm of borderless communication, an autocratic government faces digital censorship, manipulation of information, monitoring, and surveillance (Zhuravskaya et al., 2020). Political debates on social media have the potential to trigger a threat from those with different political values. This situation affects the behavior of voters who both read and are involved in existing political debates (Kahan et al., 2011). especially the novice ones with different levels of political cognition and knowledge from those of adults.

This research also points out positive results for the opposite behavior; positive and polite conversations also embrace a sense of comfort within social media discussions. Teenagers who think positively are not easily drawn into information with unclear sources and unreliable truth, making them strong to get rid of bad thoughts. Those who can think positively will use good and positive gestures and body language, so they avoid hurting others verbally. Likewise, teenagers who can communicate positively tend to talk to other people with deep empathy, involving No. emotions and conveying positive messages.

They do not have the desire to hurt and criticize other people who have different view from them because positive narratives do not present a sense of threat to them.

The results of this study correspond to those of the previous research. Susetyo (1999), through the correlation analysis of product moment and t-test, suggested an extremely significant negative relationship between positive thinking and a tendency to aggression among teenagers. Besides, Kusuma (2017) found that positive thinking training poses a reduced impact on student aggressiveness. Ardianto (2016) affirmed that positive communication within a family exerts a good impact on teens' assertiveness at school, so they will speak using positive sentences, violating no other people's rights nor hurting their feelings. According to Chaq et al., (2018), if they can organize and direct themselves to more positive direction by which a good self-image is created, they demonstrate a low level of verbal aggression (Chaq et al., 2018).

Badriyah (2018) affirmed some of the results of the previous research that community ethics promote high self-control by behaving positively. It can reduce the tendency for verbal aggression among people who live around dense settlements. In addition, Ash-Shidiq & Pratama (2021) noted that when youths and adults can filter and review unclear information (hoaxes), they demonstrate higher level of political participation. It is also based on individual reasons for becoming voters. Kim et al., (2022) revealed that the decision to vote is basically grounded to the responsibility as a citizen, and not driven by personal interests. Furthermore, voters, especially the new ones, will consider behavior that is beneficial to them in the process towards general elections. It is called the "Paradox of Voting", in which activities with voting decisions will always end up with decisions that bring the most personal benefits (Kim et al., 2022). Therefore, the voters who are accustomed to positive thinking tend to avoid aggressive behavior for their own interests and security.

CONCLUSION

The current study concludes the teenagers who use logic and common sense to their thinking are not susceptible to an unreasonable idea, and they prefer to ignore it. Logic teenagers would rather not think negatively. Hence, when speaking, they have a great degree of empathy, remain composed, and are difficult to arouse emotionally. Besides, they always speak positively, so they do not hurt others nor accuse them critics with rude words. The study results can be used as a guideline for every party involved in the democratic contestation in Indonesia to reach rational, dignified, and non-violent political culture.

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