

Escalation of Anti-Party Sentiment Among First-Time Voters in Cilegon City

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Abstract: *This paper examines young people's understanding of political parties experiencing a crisis of legitimacy and trust. Political parties are important pillars in a democratic country that have a crucial function as elements of democracy such as a forum for public aspirations. However, currently political parties are experiencing a crisis of public trust. This is caused by disappointment with politicians, parties, and their elites which has led to an escalation of anti-party sentiment in society, especially among young people. This paper aims to examine the problem of anti-party sentiment that has an impact on democratization and weakens the legitimacy of political parties. The phenomenon in this paper is analyzed using the theory of anti-party sentiment that looks at the forms of sentiment that occur among young people such as the denial of party, the Selective of party system, the selective rejection of party system and the redundancy of party. The method used in this paper is a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach ala Creswell. By using a phenomenological approach, the author conducts in-depth research with informants who experience the phenomenon of anti-party sentiment among young people in the era of political digitalization in Cilegon through interviews and objective observations. This article reviews how society views and interprets political parties that occur in their lives.*

Keywords: *Political Parties; Oligarchy; Anti-Party Sentiment*

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Abstract: This paper explores young people's understanding of political parties amid a crisis of legitimacy and public trust. Political parties are essential pillars of a democratic state, serving crucial functions as instruments of democracy and channels for public aspirations. However, political parties today face a severe trust crisis from society. This crisis stems from widespread disappointment toward politicians, parties, and their elites, which has fueled anti-party sentiment, particularly among young people. The purpose of this paper is to examine the issue of anti-party sentiment and its impact on democratization and the weakening legitimacy of political parties. The phenomenon is analyzed using the theory of anti-party sentiment, which identifies several forms of sentiment among young people, namely the denial of parties, the selective acceptance of the party system, the selective rejection of the party system, and the redundancy of parties. This study employs a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach following Creswell's framework. Through this phenomenological approach, the author investigates in depth the experiences of in-formants who exhibit anti-party sentiment among young people in the era of political digitalization in Cilegon, using interviews and objective observations. This paper discusses how society perceives and interprets the role of political parties in their everyday lives.

Keywords: *Political party; oligarchy; young people; anti-party sentiment.*

Introduction

Political parties tend to experience a legitimacy crisis, their presence is more often perceived as a burden to the state and the root of problems rather than as a main pillar of democracy (Nasir, 2016; Pamungkas, 2011; Prastya & Adiputra, 2016). The many cases of corruption, abuse of power, and transactional political practices carried out by party elites further strengthen and exacerbate public distrust (Prastya & Adiputra, 2016). Instead of being a vessel for people's aspirations and agents of change, political parties often function as tools for the interests of a handful of elites to maintain power. As a result, democracy, which should be based on participation and social justice, is distorted by the pragmatic interests of oligarchs (Nasir, 2016). If this condition continues without serious change, it is not impossible that political parties will only become empty symbols that are increasingly distant from the true essence of democracy (Nasir, 2016).

Political parties are closely related to electoral politics or elections. This is because parties are an inseparable aspect of the electoral system, as they serve as political vehicles for candidates in both presidential and regional elections, as well as legislative elections. Indonesia is a country that adheres to a democratic system of government. As a democratic country, Indonesia certainly implements every government based on justice for all citizens without discriminating on status or even social standing (Nuna & Moonti, 2019). Elections play a crucial role in determining the direction of policy and the future of a nation, as well as selecting individuals with the capability to hold government power (Nasir, 2016; Santoso & Budhiati, 2021; Sardini, 2011).

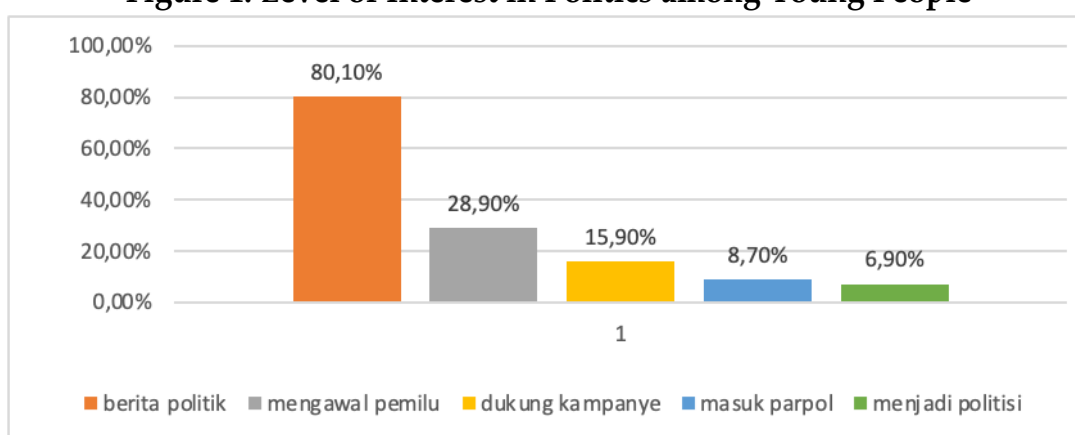
Unfortunately, elections are often exploited by certain parties, particularly capitalists who aspire to political power (Katili & Latuda, 2022). They attempt to influence the public through various unethical means, such as offering money, gifts, or other rewards as bribes to secure votes (Aspinall & Sukmajati, 2015). Furthermore, political pressure or even physical intimidation are often used to impose their will on voters. These conditions transform elections from a democratic process into an arena of manipulation, with the power of money and influence becoming more dominant than the aspirations and genuine voice of the people (Farozi, 2020).

Political parties in Indonesia tend to be controlled by elites from certain groups, whether through dynastic politics, capital power, or power networks (Juniar, 2021). This condition limits access to political decision-making, while groups without political capital struggle to obtain fair representation (Elyta et al., 2022). Based on several research data and surveys, such as the LSI (Indonesian Survey Institute), public trust in political parties has dropped drastically to 56.6%, significantly lower than that of other institutions. Even a 2022 survey by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) stated that only 1.1% of young people are involved in political parties. This data is certainly in the spotlight because it reflects the complex problems in this country (Elyta et al., 2022).

Low voter turnout in general elections may reflect issues that need to be addressed. The current political culture of Gen Z is heavily influenced by the internet and social media, which have become an integral part of Indonesian society, particularly among the upper-middle class and the younger generation (Akmaluddin & Wempie, 2022). The increasing number of internet and social media users has shifted the role of conventional media and social platforms, which were previously the primary sources of information for

the public (Ardha, 2014). The rapid development of technology has brought many significant changes to the lives of Indonesians, including politics (Dulme, 2023). The rapid development of digital platforms, coupled with globalization, has increasingly exposed the younger generation to diverse views on Indonesian politics (Akmaluddin & Wempie, 2022). Although Gen Z has extensive access to information, low levels of political literacy remain a problem. A survey by the Indonesian Society of Social Sciences (LSI) showed that only around 20% of young people in Banten have a thorough understanding of their rights and obligations as voters. This suggests that, despite their exposure to a wealth of information, not all of it is critically accepted and understood. Figure 1 shows the level of political participation among young people:

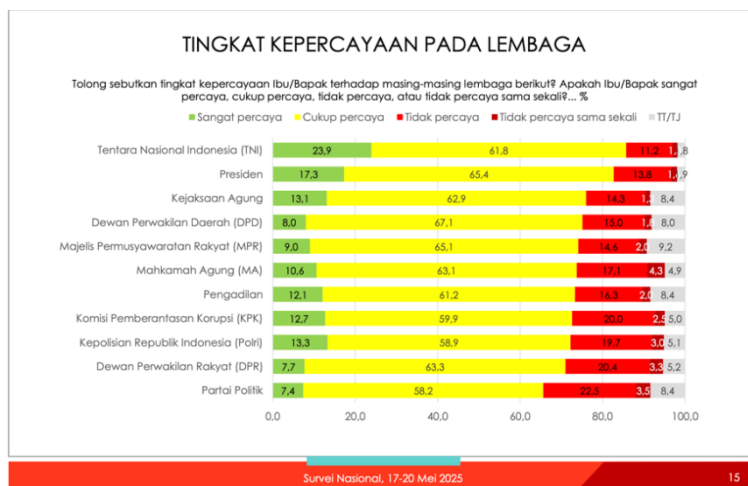
Figure 1. Level of Interest in Politics among Young People



Source : Katadata (2023)

Based on data obtained from the Insight Center (KIC) 2023 databox, it shows that only 8.7% of young people are interested in joining political parties. This figure certainly indicates low public participation, especially among young people, in political parties due to various problems concerning these institutions. This survey was conducted directly with 1,000 young people aged 17-26 years (Katadata.co.id, 2023). As a result, political parties have failed to carry out their democratic function as a forum for public aspirations. The younger generation, who have hopes for political change, actually feels increasingly marginalized because parties prioritize elite interests over the public interest. This situation has led to increasing anti-party sentiment among young people, who see political parties as tools to perpetuate the power of certain groups, rather than as instruments of inclusive democracy (Sastrawati, 2015). See Figure 2 for trends in trust in political parties:

Figure 2. Indonesian Public Trust in Political Parties



Source : Indikator (2025)

A study conducted by Indikator (2025) in Figure 2 above shows that political parties are the institutions least trusted by the Indonesian public. Anti-party sentiment has had a significant impact on the consolidation of democracy. Various problems such as reduced public participation in politics, even many young people who now abstain from voting, are a form of distrust in parties (Pamungkas, 2011) . Not only that, Pamungkas (2011) argues that negative sentiment towards parties also results in problems such as the younger generation's activities as party cadres or sympathizers, even tending towards apathy towards politics. Therefore, the number of Golongan Putih (Golput), namely people or voters who do not use their right to vote, becomes a bad precedent for electoral democracy. In the 2024 election, around 18.22% of the abstention rate was recorded. Even in the Jakarta gubernatorial election, the abstention rate reached 42.07%.

Cilegon, as an industrial city, is an interesting city to analyze, particularly regarding youth sentiment toward political parties. Wulandari & Satria (2021) explain how youth participation in Cilegon is very low. However, voter participation in the 2024 regional elections increased compared to the previous election, reaching 76.8% (Bantenraya.com, 2024) .

One striking aspect of the political contestation in Cilegon City is its high level of election vulnerability. Based on the 2024 Election Vulnerability Index (IKP) data, Cilegon ranked highest in Banten Province with a score of 66.67. This high vulnerability is driven by various factors, including the large number of independent candidates, which increases the potential for disputes, and the potential use of identity politics, which can divide society. Cilegon is known as one of the areas in Banten with strong dynastic politics. The Tubagus Aat Syafaat family and its political network controlled the city government for over a decade (2000s to the mid-2010s). Even after his leadership ended, his influence remained felt in local politics through his loyalist network. (Syarif, 2020) .

Thomas Poguntke's (1996) research on " *Anti-Party Sentiment: Conceptual Thoughts and Empirical Evidence* " shows that young people are more likely to experience anti-party sentiment than those aged 30 and over. This is evidenced by research showing that the resulting sentiment ultimately results in low youth participation in politics.

Based on the explanation above, most previous studies have discussed the legitimacy crisis and anti-party sentiment at the national level (Elyta et al., 2022; Nasir, 2016; Pamungkas, 2011; Prastya & Adiputra, 2016) , but few have highlighted the local context with its distinct socio-economic characteristics. This study fills this gap by focusing on Cilegon City, an industrial city with high levels of election vulnerability and the dominance of dynastic politics, to examine how shifts in youth participation occur amidst local political dynamics. Furthermore, previous studies rarely examine the role of digital space as a new arena for young people to interpret and respond to political parties.

Therefore, this paper discusses the escalation of anti-party sentiment among first-time voters in Cilegon City, which emerged as a result of a crisis of legitimacy and trust in political parties. Public dissatisfaction, especially among the younger generation, with elitist, transactional, and oligarchic political practices has given rise to the perception that political parties are no longer a vehicle for the people's aspirations, but rather instruments of power for a handful of elites. Low levels of political participation among young people, limited political literacy, and the dominance of dynastic politics and the influence of capital at the local level exacerbate this situation. In the context of Cilegon City, which has the highest level of election vulnerability in Banten Province and a long history of dynastic politics, anti-party sentiment among first-time voters is growing stronger. This phenomenon not only impacts electoral participation and increases the number of abstentions but also threatens the consolidation of democracy at the local level. Therefore, this paper emphasizes the importance of transforming political parties so they can adapt to the dynamics of the younger generation and restore public trust in order to strengthen participatory and inclusive democracy.

Method

This paper is part of a qualitative research study using Creswell's phenomenological approach. Qualitative research focuses on the processes or steps involved in the research. This method can be used by researchers to explain the purpose of this study, namely describing the experience or phenomenon of anti-party sentiment and seeking the essence of that experience. Phenomenology is defined as the general interpretation derived from several individuals regarding their life experiences or phenomena using concepts or phenomena. In this approach, Creswell (2014) defines phenomenology as " *Emphasizes the subjective experiences of individuals regarding specific phenomena. Researchers seek to understand the essence and meaning behind individuals' experiences.* " Furthermore, this paper tends to use Husserl's phenomenology, which was later developed by Creswell (2014) . Creswell defines phenomenology as an approach that focuses on in-depth descriptions of individual life experiences by removing the researcher's prejudices and biases through a process called " *bracketing* " or " *epoche* ." The aim is to uncover the universal essence of a phenomenon based on individual direct experience, without incorporating the researcher's personal interpretations or judgments. This phenomenon explains how young people describe political parties and how they interpret them as important institutions in a democratic state.

In obtaining data, this paper uses several data collection techniques as follows: *First* , interviews. Interviews are communication conducted to obtain information. This communication is carried out by two people: the person who asks questions (*interviewer*) and the

person who answers questions (*interviewer*). Interviews were conducted with key informants, in this case young voters in Cilegon City, between May and September 2025. The following is a list of key informants interviewed.

Table 1. Cilegon Voter Informants

| No | Key Informant Name | Gender | Age |
|----|--------------------|--------|--------------|
| 1 | Heni Nurnawati | Woman | 20 years |
| 2 | Sodikin | Man | 20 years |
| 3 | Mita | Woman | 24 years old |
| 4 | Minerva | Woman | 23 years |
| 5 | Wulan | Woman | 20 years |

Table 2. Party Representative Informants

| No | Name | Work |
|----|----------|-----------------------------|
| 1 | Syahroni | Party Success Team |
| 2 | Nasir | Secretary of the Golkar DPD |

Second , literature study, which is a data collection technique by examining sources such as books, notes, literature, and other sources. Third, documentation, which is the research team will also use documentation techniques to obtain information or evidence in the form of images or other materials.

Results

To better understand the crisis of trust in political parties in Cilegon City, it is important to examine how young people interpret the existence and role of parties in their political lives. The perspective of the younger generation is crucial because this group represents a demographic segment with significant potential in determining the future direction of politics, as well as being the group most impacted by social and technological change. Through various interviews and fieldwork, diverse perspectives were revealed, ranging from critical attitudes towards party performance to forms of disappointment that give rise to political apathy. These key statements from young people in Cilegon provide important reflections on how political parties are perceived, their relevance, and how their image and function have shifted in the eyes of the digital generation. Analysis of these views provides a foundation for understanding the forms of anti-party sentiment and the challenges faced in rebuilding political trust among young people.

Table 3. Young People's Views on Political Parties in Cilegon

| Name | Key Views | Meaning |
|-----------------------|--|--|
| Heni Nurnawati | <i>"Political parties are political institutions that serve as electoral vehicles for those in power ,</i> | Political symbols in a democratic country |

| | | |
|----------------|--|--|
| | <i>those with money. They use them to achieve power, so they're like a complement to elections and democracy."</i> | |
| Sodikin | <i>"Parties are the pillars of a democratic state. Currently, if possible, political parties are like talking about oligarchy , so parties are not carrying out their function as a channel for the aspirations of the people but rather as a tool to achieve oligarchic power for those who have power and money."</i> | Vehicles of rulers such as Oligarchy |
| Mita | <i>"Political parties are a vehicle for the people's aspirations. Their current function is unclear, as the system is broken, focusing solely on power rather than strengthening democracy."</i> | Power-oriented institutions |
| Minerva | <i>"An organization that houses or becomes a forum for people who have the same ambition , namely power"</i> | An organization that acts as a container or shelter . |
| Wulan | <i>"A political party is like a group of people who have the same goal of governing country . They have ideas or views about how the country should be run."</i> | A collection of people with the same goal. |

Source : Processed by the Writing Team from Interview Results

Not only that, based on the results of interviews and observations conducted by researchers on several young people who have different backgrounds, namely students, workers and also young people who are not students, there are no significant differences in the meaning of political parties.

" I'm disappointed with political parties, but I realize they're an important part of our country, such as participating in elections. So, even though I'm disappointed that the current role of political parties doesn't reflect their function well, I still acknowledge that political parties are important and cannot be eliminated, and I still acknowledge their existence. " Interview with Cilegon Student, May 7, 2025

" Political parties currently do not have a positive influence on the development of the country because they focus on power, but without parties, our country's function will become increasingly unclear, therefore I do not reject parties as a whole because I still recognize the importance of the existence of parties even though I don't really believe in them now. " Interview with Cilegon workers, May 7, 2025

On the other hand, there are also young people who place more emphasis on assessment than overall rejection of political party institutions. They don't outright reject the existence of parties, but rather make selective assessments, as seen in the following interview:

" Honestly, I still want to believe in political parties, but now that trust isn't as strong as it used to be. The thing is, many parties seem inconsistent and even cause problems, so when choosing a party, I don't just look at the party's name, but also look at the people within it, what their track record is, and whether they are truly working for the people or just seeking a position. " Interview with Cilegon Student, May 7, 2025

As critical human beings, young people also believe that they do not necessarily reject the existence of political parties absolutely, but they show a selective attitude, especially towards the party system which is considered to have failed to create healthy competition, fair political representation, or sustainable democratic stability.

" When choosing a party, I don't just look at the name of the party, but also the people within it, their track record, and whether they're truly working for the people or just seeking office. Sometimes I even feel like the system is problematic, like the politics are dominated by the same people, making it difficult for real change to happen. " Interview with Cilegon Student, May 7, 2025

More extreme, based on interviews, some young people are actually starting to lose trust in political parties as representatives of their interests. Instead, they trust other democratic institutions that are considered more credible in voicing the people's interests.

" In conditions like this, I have more trust in other institutions that appear more neutral and transparent, like NGOs or social communities that genuinely work for the community without political interests. They seem to be actually helping people, not just making election promises. " Interview with Cilegon Student, May 7, 2025

Discussion

Political parties are not a new phenomenon in modern politics. Experts have long offered various definitions and perspectives on the role, function, and position of parties in a democratic system. Generally, political parties are understood as a forum that gathers public aspirations, articulates public interests, and acts as a bridge between the people and the state in the political decision-making process. As a key pillar of democracy, political parties function not only as a means of political recruitment and policy formation, but also as an instrument to ensure the sustainability of the mechanism of popular representation. Therefore, the existence of political parties should be a crucial foundation for a healthy and inclusive democracy.

As intermediary actors in the political system, political parties should be the institutions most trusted by the public because they play a strategic role in connecting the public

with the government. However, in practice, trust in parties tends to decline due to various issues such as corruption, money politics, and elite dominance. This situation is interesting to examine in the context of Cilegon City, known as an industrial city with complex socio-economic dynamics. Despite its great potential for development, Cilegon also faces serious challenges in terms of political participation, especially among young people. The phenomenon of political apathy that has emerged in this region reflects the distance between political parties and the public and indicates a crisis of representation that could threaten the quality of local democracy.

The Dynamic Context of Political Practices in Cilegon City

Cilegon City currently faces complex political dynamics, influenced by various social, economic, and rapidly evolving technological factors (Fitriana, 2022). As a strategic industrial region in Banten Province, Cilegon has unique political characteristics and is vulnerable to various forms of political tension. The social diversity of its community creates unique challenges in the consolidation of local democracy, one of which is the low level of political participation among young people. The younger generation in Cilegon tends to display a passive and apathetic attitude towards politics, with only a small group, such as students, actively involved in political activities and public advocacy (Wulandari & Satria, 2021).

One important indicator reflecting the political complexity in Cilegon is the high level of election vulnerability. Based on the 2024 Election Vulnerability Index (IKP), Cilegon was recorded as the region with the highest level of vulnerability in Banten Province, with a score of 66.67. This condition is caused by several factors, such as the increasing number of independent candidates, which has the potential to cause disputes, and the use of identity politics, which can trigger social polarization. Furthermore, dynastic politics is a strong characteristic of Cilegon's political dynamics. The Tubagus Aat Syafaat family, for example, has dominated the local power structure for over a decade, and its influence persists through loyalist networks to this day (Syarif, 2020). The shift in power in the 2024 regional elections, in which the pair Andra Soni and Dimiyati Natakusumah defeated the incumbent Helldy Agustian with 53.4% of the vote, reflects increased electoral competition and a public tendency to reassess the performance of the previous administration.

Despite this, political participation in Cilegon has shown a downward trend. According to BPS (2024) data, voter turnout, which reached 76% in the 2019 election, declined to 69% in the 2024 election, with a significant decline among young voters (aged 17–29). Furthermore, government dynamics have worsened public perception of political parties and government institutions. At the end of his term, Mayor Helldy Agustian faced various challenges, including student demonstrations demanding payment of honorary teachers' salaries and a reported Rp130 billion budget deficit revealed by the new government under Robinsar.

This situation reinforces negative sentiment toward politics among the public, especially the younger generation. Dissatisfaction with government performance, dynastic political practices, and the dominance of political patronage foster apathy and undermine trust in party institutions. In the context of political digitalization, the rapid and often un-

verified flow of information also shapes young people's perceptions of the political world, reinforcing the cynical view that politics is merely an arena of power for the elite. Therefore, this situation demands serious attention from the local government and political parties to rebuild public trust through transparency, inclusivity, and political education oriented toward the active participation of young people in strengthening local democracy in Cilegon City.

The Meaning of Political Parties by Cilegon Youth

Theoretically, political parties can be interpreted from two different perspectives, namely a positive perspective and a negative perspective. From a positive perspective, Robert A. Dahl (1982) explains that in a democratic country there are social groups that he calls "intermediaries" between the state and society. Their purpose is to act as a connecting actor and become a bulwark against excessive state power. This is the forerunner of what is called a political party. In addition, Dahl also explains that political parties are one of the tools for exercising political rights in the democratic process. Several other experts define political parties as groups whose members act in fighting for power (Schumpeter, 2003) , a group of autonomous citizens who gain power through general elections (Huckshorn in White, 2006) , a group of people organized for the purpose of winning power and occupying government (Heywood, 2002) , or political parties are used to unite divided and diverse groups, encouraging active participation in politics (White, 2006) .

Meanwhile, from a negative perspective, Robert Michels (1962) defined a party as an organization with diverse members and a common goal, but he described political parties as organizations that are only regulated or controlled by a handful of people. This is also known as the "iron law of oligarchy". In a similar view, Alexis de Tocqueville (2000) in his book *Democracy in America* defined political parties as evil in free governments "parties are an evil inherent in free governments". Simply put, he considered that the political party system and democracy in America at that time actually opened up opportunities for the majority political party to act as they pleased. A minority political party would get nothing, because everything had been determined by the majority political group or party.

From these two theoretical perspectives, it can be understood that political parties have an ambivalent position in a democratic system: on the one hand, they are an important instrument for popular participation and strengthening political representation; but on the other hand, they also have the potential to become a tool of power domination by a handful of elites. Ideally, political parties are able to fulfill their role as representative institutions that channel public aspirations, educate citizens in political life, and maintain a balance between the state and civil society as mandated by Law No. 2 of 2011 concerning Political Parties. However, the current political reality shows the opposite. Political parties often fail to fulfill their ideal function because they are more oriented towards power than public service.

This phenomenon is evident not only at the national level, but also at the local level, such as in Cilegon City. As an industrial city with complex socio-economic dynamics, Cilegon is showing clear signs of a crisis of trust in political parties. Young people, who should be the driving force of democracy, are instead displaying apathy and skepticism

toward political parties, which they view as elitist, closed, and uninspired institutions. Political apathy, low participation in party activities, and criticism of local elites, perceived as oligarchic, are a strong reflection of the degradation of party function at the regional level. For most young people in Cilegon, political parties are no longer seen as bridges between the people and the state, but merely as "vehicles" of power active only around elections.

Table 3 clearly demonstrates the significant decline in political parties' role as representative institutions, which should serve as a means for the public to channel their political aspirations. A crisis of trust in political parties is evident, particularly among the younger generation, who are increasingly critical due to intense exposure to digital information flows and political discourse in the digital space. This situation is exacerbated by the closed nature of local politics in Cilegon, which tends to be closed and lacks public transparency, despite its high political dynamics. As a result, political parties are no longer perceived as a link between the people and the state, but rather as mere electoral instruments active only in the lead-up to elections. The absence of parties in the socio-political life of society outside of the campaign period reinforces the perception that they do not function as agents of public participation but exist solely for electoral interests. This underscores the degradation of political parties' function within Cilegon's local democratic system, leading to increased skepticism and apathy among young voters.

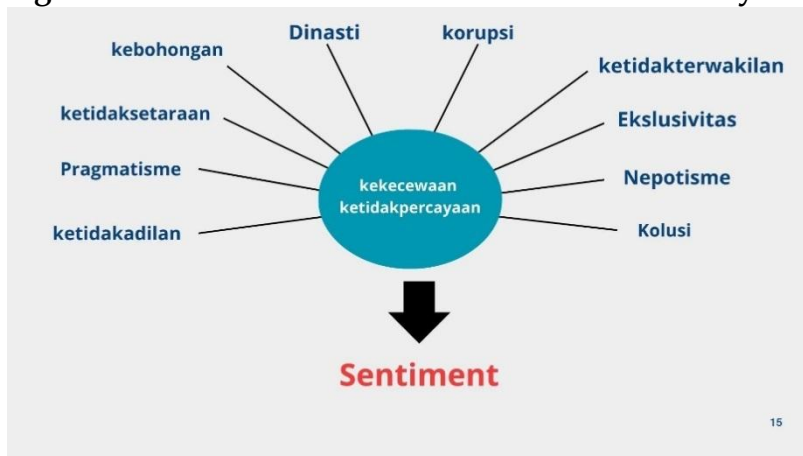
This also aligns with research conducted by the Indonesian Institute of Sciences (now the Agency for Public Research and Innovation/BRIN) in 2020, which showed that only 23.4% of respondents expressed trust in political parties. This percentage is significantly lower than trust in the Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI) (89%), the President (75%), and even civil society organizations (49%) (Indonesian Institute of Sciences, 2021). This situation is a serious concern because the declining interest of the younger generation in politics has the potential to create a vacuum in the regeneration process of political leadership. In the context of sustainable and inclusive democratic development, active youth participation is an essential prerequisite for ensuring the sustainability of democratic values. When young people feel marginalized or lose trust in the political system, the space for public participation will increasingly be dominated by actors with economic resources and power networks, rather than by individuals committed to integrity and political reform. As a result, the democratization process risks becoming trapped in an oligarchic cycle that hinders the emergence of progressive political leadership oriented toward social change.

An Examination of the Forms of Anti-Party Sentiment Among Young People

According to Sigit Pamungkas (2011) in his work *Political Parties*, there are several forms of anti-party sentiment that refer to the classification proposed by Daalder. Daalder divides anti-party sentiment into four main categories, namely *the denial of party*, *the selective acceptance of the party system*, *the selective rejection of the party system*, and *the redundancy of party*. These four forms illustrate the variation in public critical attitudes towards the existence and function of political parties in a democratic system. Conceptually, Daalder's idea has similarities with the framework proposed by Torcal, Gunther, and Montero, especially in seeing how public trust in parties can be eroded due to dissatisfaction with political performance and representation. However, Daalder's contribution lies in a more de-

tailed elaboration of each form of sentiment, thus providing a more comprehensive understanding of how distrust in parties can emerge and develop in various socio-political contexts.

Figure 3. Illustration of the Formation of Anti-Party Sentiment

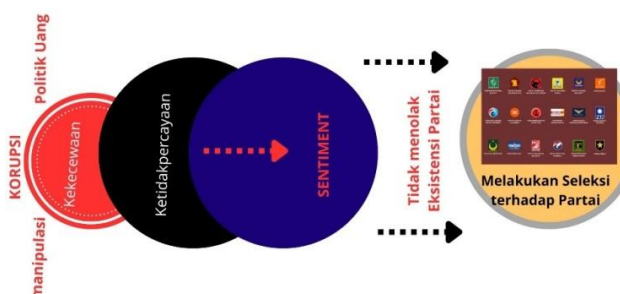


Source : Processed by the Writing Team

Field research results indicate that these four forms emerge in the views of young people aged 20–30 in Cilegon. These sentiments emerge in response to distrust of political parties, which are perceived as elitist, unmotivated, vested with vested interests, and frequently implicated in corruption cases. These sentiments are as follows:

First , The Denial of Party . The Denial of Party represents a deep disappointment towards political parties without being accompanied by a total rejection of their existence (Pamungkas, 2011) . In the context of this research, there are young students who feel disappointed with political parties, but still recognize that parties have an important and in-eradicable role in the democratic system. A similar view was also expressed by a worker who assessed that political parties have not provided a significant positive impact, but are still necessary for the sustainability of state governance. This reflects a form of critical rationality among young people, where dissatisfaction with the performance of parties does not necessarily lead to an ideological rejection of the existence of the parties themselves. Thus, *The Denial of Party* can be understood as an expression of distrust rooted in disappointment towards the behavior of political parties, but still accompanied by recognition of the institutional function of parties in the democratic system.

Figure 4. Illustration of the Denial of Party Mechanism



Source : Processed by the Writing Team

Second , *The Selective of Party System* , which describes the selective attitude of the younger generation in assessing political parties, where the assessment is not comprehensive or total, but rather based on certain aspects such as the integrity, track record, and performance of the party and its actors (Pamungkas, 2011) . A student interviewed stated that he still wants to trust political parties, but that trust depends on the individuals within them and the extent to which they truly work for the benefit of the people, not simply pursuing positions of power. This view reflects a shift in the political orientation of young people towards a more rational and information-based mindset, as explained by Inglehart through the concept of *cognitive mobilization* . The advancement of political digitalization has also strengthened this tendency, as young people now have wider access to public information, including the behavior and track record of politicians through various social media platforms. Thus, this form of sentiment reflects the emergence of a new political rationality rooted in the analytical skills and digital literacy of the younger generation in assessing the credibility of political parties in a more critical and measured manner.

Third , *The Selective Rejection of Party System* reflects the critical attitude of young people towards the party system which is considered elitist, closed, and does not provide space for the birth of substantial change (Pamungkas, 2011) . In this context, informants stated that the political system in Indonesia seems to be controlled by the same elite group, so that the opportunity for the emergence of new actors with progressive ideas is very limited. This view shows that young people's distrust is not only directed at certain political parties, but also at systemic structures that are considered to perpetuate elite domination and hinder internal party democratization. Nevertheless, most respondents still showed a tendency to judge individuals within the party, rather than completely rejecting the party system.

This is in line with research from the Indonesian Institute of Sciences (2021) , which showed that 63% of young voters trust political figures more than their party institutions, primarily because political parties are perceived as failing to promote transparent and inclusive cadre regeneration. Thus, this sentiment underscores the growing tension between the political idealism of the younger generation and the reality of a party system that remains oligarchic and exclusive.

Fourth , *The Redundancy of Party* describes the shift in the orientation of trust of the younger generation from formal political institutions to alternative institutions such as NGOs, social communities, and digital spaces that are considered more independent, transparent, and responsive to the needs of society (Pamungkas, 2011) . From the results of the interviews conducted, it was revealed that there are groups who themselves place more trust in non-partisan institutions that work concretely for the community without pragmatic political interests. Although some young people still recognize the importance of the existence of political parties in the electoral context, they tend to channel aspirations and socio-political activities through horizontal platforms or organizations based on social networks. This phenomenon shows the transformation of the form of political participation that is no longer vertically oriented to formal institutions, but is flexible, collaborative, and based on the values of digital citizenship.

This also aligns with the findings of Tapsell (2019) and a survey by the Indonesian Institute of Sciences (2021), which showed increasing levels of public trust, particularly among younger generations, in social media and online communities compared to political parties. Therefore, this sentiment marks the emergence of new patterns of political participation, reflecting the younger generation's adaptation to changes in the political ecology of the digital era.

Overall, anti-party sentiment among young people in Cilegon City is diverse and not absolute, but rather reflects forms of critical attitudes toward political parties and the party system. The four forms of sentiment proposed by Daalder— *the denial of party, the selective acceptance of the party system, the selective rejection of the party system, and the redundancy of party*— appear clearly in the socio-political context of Cilegon's youth. These attitudes arise in response to various disappointments with political parties that are considered elitist, non-aspirational, lack transparency, and fail to fulfill their representative function. However, these findings also indicate that young people do not necessarily reject politics, but rather seek new, more rational, information-based, and decentralized forms of participation through digital spaces and social communities. Thus, the phenomenon of anti-party sentiment in Cilegon not only indicates a crisis of trust in party institutions, but also a transformation of the political orientation of the younger generation towards a more autonomous, horizontal, and adaptive pattern of participation to the dynamics of digital democracy.

Conclusion

Based on this explanation, it can be concluded that political parties in Cilegon City are experiencing a crisis of legitimacy and public trust, especially among the younger generation. While theoretically, political parties serve as instruments of public representation, channels for aspirations, and means of political education, in practice, this role has been degraded due to elite domination, oligarchic practices, and weak institutional transparency. Local political conditions characterized by dynastic politics, low youth voter participation, and declining trust in political actors have reinforced the emergence of apathy and critical sentiment toward political parties.

In the context of Cilegon's youth, anti-party sentiment is not singular, but reflects four forms as proposed by Daalder: *the denial of party, the selective acceptance of the party system, the selective rejection of the party system, and the redundancy of party*. These four forms illustrate the psychological and political dynamics of young people who still recognize the importance of political parties in a democratic system, but reject the workings and behavior of parties that are considered unambitious, closed, and full of interests.

This phenomenon suggests that the younger generation is not entirely apolitical, but rather is seeking new forms of political participation that are more horizontal, collaborative, and socially networked in the digital space. Thus, the crisis of trust in political parties in Cilegon not only reflects the decline of their representative function but also signals a shift in the political orientation of the younger generation toward more rational, autonomous, and adaptive participation patterns in the development of digital democracy.

Therefore, political parties need to undertake internal reforms by strengthening transparency, cadre regeneration, and youth engagement to restore public trust and maintain their relevance in local and national democratic systems.

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