***Peringatan Darurat: Political Engagement of Indonesian University Students amid Political Uncertainty*****Muhammad Zulfa Alfaruqy^{12✉}, Isnaeni Anggun Sari³**¹Faculty of Psychology, Universitas Diponegoro, Indonesia²Faculty of Psychology, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Indonesia³Nursing Department, Poltekkes Kemenkes Semarang, Indonesia**Article Info***Keywords:**Peringatan Darurat; Political Engagement; Political Psychology; Uncertainty; University Students***Abstract**

The maneuvers of the political elite ahead of the Regional Head Election sparked the birth of the *Peringatan Darurat* movement, which involved the public at large, including students. This research aims to understand how students' *political engagement* in the *Peringatan Darurat* movement unfolds amid political uncertainty. This exploratory qualitative research uses a survey design involving 500 students as participants. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to identify the frequency and percentage of engagement forms, and thematic analysis to explore the meanings of movements and the reasons behind each form of engagement. The results of the study show that the majority of students interpret the *Peringatan Darurat* movement as a political symbol that represents a precarious political situation, marked by threats to democracy and the rule of law, and by efforts to perpetuate dynastic politics and abuse of power. However, this meaning is not singular. Some students see this movement as a catalyst for greater awareness and political participation, while others are confused or even view it negatively. In response to the *Peringatan Darurat* movement, students displayed various forms of *political engagement*, with a dominance of digital engagement such as information seeking and activism on social media, while offline involvement, such as demonstrations, was relatively limited. Using the *framework of Uncertainty–Identity Theory*, this study shows that student *political engagement* functions as an identity strategy to navigate political uncertainty in the context of digital democracy. These findings also challenge normative assumptions that equate low mass mobilization with weak *political engagement*.

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INTRODUCTION

The *Peringatan Darurat Movement* in August 2024 is an event that has psychological implications for the people of Indonesia. This movement is marked by the appearance of the white Garuda Pancasila symbol on a blue background and the inscription "Peringatan Darurat" which is widely spread on various social media platforms (Ilhamsyah, 2024). The appearance of the symbol cannot be separated from the political dynamics after the Constitutional Court (MK) decisions Number 60/PUU-XXII/2024 and Number 70/PUU-XXII/2024 regarding the minimum age limit and the threshold for nominating regional heads ahead of the Regional Head Election (Pilkada). Normatively, this Constitutional Court decision opens up opportunities for the emergence of more alternative candidates for regional heads. However, the move by members of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia (DPR RI) to accelerate the revision of the Regional Election Law is perceived by civil society as a systematic maneuver to manipulate the substance of the Constitutional Court's decision for the benefit of certain political elites (Flassy et al., 2025).

In response to these maneuvers, civil society took various actions, both through demonstrations and digital activism. Drone Emprit data (2024) shows that conversations about Peringatan Darurat symbols and hashtags #KawalPutusanMK are dominated by positive sentiment, which is around 99% on online media and 86% on social media. The dominance of this positive sentiment reflects the breadth of public support for the invitation to oversee the Constitutional Court's decision as well as criticizing the legislative maneuvers of members of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia. Furthermore, Drone Emprit (2024) also detected the emergence of emotions such as anger, surprise, and fear, indicating that public support is framed by complex affective responses.

In the political literature, the term "emergency" is generally understood as an extraordinary situation that justifies government actions outside normal procedures in the face of an urgent threat (Fatovic, 2019). This kind of emergency narrative is often produced *top-down* by the government. However, under certain conditions, the emergency narrative emerges bottom-up from civil society as a warning against the symptoms of *democratic backsliding* (Bermeo, 2016; Lührmann & Lindberg, 2019) or *democratic regression* (Warburton & Aspinall, 2019). In the *Peringatan Darurat movement* in Indonesia, the emergency narrative developed bottom-up from civil society's anxiety about legislation perceived as beyond the limits of reasonableness. The symbol of the Blue Garuda serves as a marker of the democratic emergency, representing criticism of a legislative process considered hasty, lacking public participation, and ignoring constitutional reasoning (Ilhamsyah, 2024).

One of the civil society groups that is actively involved in the *Peringatan Darurat movement* is students. Historically, students have occupied a strategic position in Indonesia's political and democratic dynamics, even in the pre-independence period (Altbach, 2007; Aspinall, 2012). From a political psychology perspective, student involvement in this movement can be understood as a form of *political engagement*. *Political engagement* is the involvement of individuals in efforts to influence government political processes and decision-making (Barrett & Pachi, 2019). *Political engagement* includes cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions (Karageorgou et al., 2024). Politically engaged individuals have deep thoughts and feelings on political issues. Some individuals may be limited to deep thoughts and feelings, but some individuals also actualize in real action.

In the study of *political engagement*, the concept of online political engagement is known. If *political engagement* refers to general engagement in various arenas, then *online political engagement* specifically refers to *political engagement* mediated by digital technology. This form of engagement includes symbolic expression, sharing political information, online discussions, and the formation of collective solidarity through social media (Boulianne & Theocharis, 2020; Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2014). Research by Sormanen et al. (2025) shows that digital spaces, which were not originally designed as political arenas, have become important for the political expression of the younger generation. Involvement in digital activities strengthens the political identity of the younger generation (Jia & Fee, 2025). Thus, *online and offline political engagement* do not stand separately, but complement each other.

A number of studies show that student *political engagement* is influenced by a combination of individual and contextual factors. Alfaruqy and Padmonurcahyo (2023), for example, found that student *political engagement* is influenced by motivation to contribute, personal interests, perceptions of national conditions, access to information, and the social environment. On the one hand, access to information from various sources can expand students' political knowledge; on the other hand, it can also increase exposure to disinformation and information fatigue. This situation can, in turn, give rise to ambivalence and uncertainty in evaluating political events (Head et al., 2019; Laksuri et al., 2025). In addition, *political engagement* is also often driven by emotions such as disappointment, anger, and betrayal, especially when government policies are perceived to deviate from the normative principles of democracy (Dey & Dey, 2025).

To explain students' political engagement in the context of the *Peringatan Darurat*, this study draws on the *Uncertainty–Identity Theory* (UIT). The theory assumes that individuals are motivated to reduce *self-uncertainty*, especially regarding identity and social position, in ambiguous situations (Hogg, 2012). When experiencing uncertainty, individuals tend to seek certainty through the process of identification with social groups (*group identification*) (Hogg & Wagoner, 2017). This process involves the transformation from personal to social identity, governed by a prototype group or by guidelines for attitudes, emotions, and behaviors considered appropriate within a group (Hogg, 2012). Within this framework, groups serve as an important space for the formation of individual social identities. Hogg (2024) shows that groups with a high level of *entitativity* are effective in reducing uncertainty because they provide relatively clear membership boundaries and norms. When uncertainty is perceived as an *uncertainty-as-threat*, *group identification* can drive more intense political action, including mobilization and affirmation of *ingroup–outgroup boundaries* (Hogg, 2024).

Uncertainty–Identity Theory views political uncertainty not only as a situational factor but also as a condition with psychological implications for individuals (Hogg, 2012). Prolonged uncertainty can increase collective anxiety, weaken trust in political institutions, and encourage extreme responses, including intensification of participation and withdrawal from the political arena (Hetherington & Rudolph, 2015). For students in the impressionable years, this kind of experience can shape civic orientation and attitudes towards democracy in the next phase of life (Sears & Brown, 2023; Jennings et al., 2009). Therefore, understanding how students interpret political uncertainty is crucial for explaining the current form of political involvement and for gauging the direction of future democratic development.

Empirical research on the decline of democracy (e.g., Bermeo, 2016; Fossati, 2019; Warburton & Aspinall, 2019) and student activism (e.g., Altbach, 2007; Alfaruqy, 2025; Ansala et al., 2015) have indeed grown rapidly. However, there are still limitations in understanding how students subjectively interpret political uncertainty and how it shapes their political responses. Studies on the psychological mechanisms underlying students' responses in situations of political uncertainty have received relatively little attention, especially in non-Western contexts (Karageorgou et al., 2024). Therefore, this research offers contextual novelty by placing the *Peringatan Darurat movement* as a context in which symbols and collective narratives function as mechanisms for reducing uncertainty. This research also extends the application of *Uncertainty–Identity Theory* to the decline of democracy and the activism of younger generations outside Western countries.

Departing from this framework, this political psychology research asks the main question: *How is student political engagement in the Peringatan Darurat movement amid political uncertainty?* Specifically, this study seeks to answer three questions: (1) How do students interpret the *Peringatan Darurat movement*? (2) How did students respond to the *Peringatan Darurat movement*? and (3) Why was the response chosen? Overall, this study aims to understand *student political engagement* in the context of political uncertainty and to make a theoretical contribution to the literature on social and political psychology regarding the relationship among conditions of uncertainty, social identity, and *political engagement*.

METHOD

This study uses an exploratory qualitative design to understand student political engagement in the Peringatan Darurat movement, which is marked by political uncertainty. Research participants were recruited based on the following inclusion criteria: active students domiciled in Central Java Province. Students were chosen because they represent the Generation Z group, which is educated and growing up as *digital natives*, with relatively different patterns of information consumption and socio-political challenges compared to previous generations. Central Java Province was chosen as the research location because it is one of the provinces with the largest Generation Z population in Indonesia (BPS, 2021; BPS Central Java, 2021). In addition, the Central Java Regional Election presents a "Star Wars"- style scenario, as it brings together former generals of the Indonesian National Army (TNI) and the Indonesian National Police (POLRI). As explained in the Introduction, the *Peringatan Darurat movement* cannot be separated from the maneuvers of the political elite ahead of the Regional Elections.

Data collection was conducted through an online survey, focusing on accessibility, efficiency, and suitability with students' digital preferences. The online survey allowed researchers to reach participants from various districts and cities in Central Java Province in a relatively short time. Surveys are designed to support data exploration by combining closed-ended and open-ended questions. Closed-ended questions were used to obtain an overview of students' political responses, while open-ended questions were used to explore the meaning of the Peringatan Darurat movement and the reasons behind students' political responses. The survey was conducted from October 31 to November 7, 2024, or about two months after the momentum of the *Peringatan Darurat* movement, so that participants had enough time to reflect on the event. Overall, as many as 500 students from various districts/cities in Central Java participated in this study, with participants distributed relatively proportionally to the distribution of districts/cities.

Data analysis was carried out using two complementary strategies to provide a comprehensive picture of student *political engagement*. First, the data obtained from the closed-ended questions were analyzed using descriptive statistics to identify the frequency and percentage of participants' responses. This analysis provides quantitative context on the general tendency of student responses to the *Peringatan Darurat movement*. Second, the data from open-ended questions were analyzed using thematic analysis, following the guidelines of Braun and Clarke (2006). The analysis was carried out systematically through six stages, namely: (1) familiarization with the data through repeated reading; (2) initial coding to identify relevant units of meaning; (3) grouping the code into initial themes; (4) review and refinement of themes to ensure internal coherence and differences between themes; (5) definition and naming of themes; and (6) the preparation of analytical reports that relate the themes of findings to the theoretical framework of the research.

To maintain the credibility and reliability of the research findings, the coding and theme review process is carried out through cross-checking between researchers. Discussions continued until an agreement was reached on the theme and meaning of the data, thereby minimizing the researcher's subjectivity bias in the analysis. This research is conducted in accordance with the ethical principles of research. All participants provided informed *consent* before filling out the survey. The identities of the participants are kept confidential, and all data are used solely for academic purposes. Participant participation is anonymous, and participants may terminate their participation at any time without consequences.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study involved 500 students with diverse demographic characteristics (see Table 1). In terms of gender, participants were dominated by female students at 58.0% (n = 290), while male students accounted for 42.0% (n = 210). Judging from age, the majority of respondents were in the

18–19 age range, which was 69.4% (n = 347), followed by the age group of 20–21 years old at 28.4% (n = 142), and only a small proportion aged 22 years and above at 2.2% (n = 11). In terms of education, most participants were Bachelor's program students (76.8%; n = 384), followed by Diploma students (22.8%; n = 114), while Master's students accounted for only 0.4% (n = 2). Overall, these characteristics suggest that the research findings primarily reflect the views of young undergraduate students, at an early stage of higher education and a crucial period of political development.

Table 1. Participant Demographics

Variabel	N	%
Gender		
Male	210	42,00%
Female	290	58,00%
Age		
18 – 19	347	69,40%
20 – 21	142	28,40%
22 and up	11	2,20%
Current Education Level		
Diploma	114	22,80%
Bachelor	384	76,80%
Magister	2	0,40%

Universe of Student Thinking on the *Peringatan Darurat* Movement

The thematic analysis identified seven main themes in students' interpretations of the *Peringatan Darurat* movement. The seven themes reflect diversity, ranging from deep concern for the future of democracy to the encouragement of civic participation and confusion and apathy.

Concerns about Threats to Democracy and the Rule of Law (26.80%)

The dominant theme is that students interpret the *Peringatan Darurat* movement as a marker of a precarious political situation, especially in relation to the practice of deviating from the principles of democracy and the rule of law. The efforts of members of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia to revise the Election Law after the Constitutional Court's decisions Numbers 60 and 70 have been hasty and may obscure the meaning of the Constitution and weaken legal authority. In this framework, students see this movement not just as a visual symbol that goes viral in the digital space, but as a warning mechanism from civil society about the potential for systemic democratic decline. These concerns stem from the fragility of the law's procedural aspects and the fear of the political elite's negotiating practices driven by short-term political interests. This perception gives rise to a narrative that Indonesia's democracy is "not okay" and requires collective public vigilance.

"The Constitutional Court is the guardian of the constitution, where its job is to maintain the rules of democracy in Indonesia. If the House of Representatives ignores the rules as if they can be changed for political interests, the steps it takes signal that the rules can be negotiated. This will lead to an unhealthy democracy." (P276)

Criticism of Dynastic Politics and Abuse of Power (20.40%)

The second theme featured student criticism of dynastic political practices and abuse of power ahead of the Regional Elections. The revision of the Election Law is understood as a form of legal manipulation that benefits certain elite groups and narrows the principles of justice and equality in political competition. In this sense, the movement *Peringatan Darurat* is positioned as a form of resistance to the normalization of dynastic political perpetuation practices and the practice of abuse of power that is considered to hurt democratic ethics. Students highlight the families of certain politicians and criticize the system that allows power to accumulate through loopholes in the law. This

criticism is often accompanied by expressions of disappointment and a sense of loss of trust in state institutions.

"This illustrates public unrest against the revision of the Regional Election Law, which is considered to benefit certain political dynasties. By following the Supreme Court rather than the Constitutional Court, the House of Representatives gives young candidates from elite families the opportunity to participate in elections, which appears to be contrary to the principles of justice and openness in democracy. For me, this action can damage public trust in the political system and needs to be responded to seriously by the public so that the democratic process does not only benefit certain groups." (P154)

Political Awareness and Student Civil Participation (17.60%)

Some students interpret the movement of *Peringatan Darurat* as a momentum for the growth of political awareness and civic participation, especially among students. This phenomenon is perceived as a political learning space because it provides students with an opportunity to voice their aspirations and to supervise the implementation of the democratic system. Students see the involvement of civil society in discussions, the dissemination of information in the digital space, and collective action as indications that society is not completely apathetic. This movement is understood as a factor that triggers political awareness, even among those who were not previously very interested in politics.

"Peringatan Darurats that spread on social media cannot be underestimated, and we need to be responsive in responding to this. This Peringatan Darurat invites the public to increase awareness and active participation in maintaining democracy and justice in Indonesia" (P012)

Confusion and Weakness of Political Literacy (15.60%)

This theme shows that students experience confusion and even choose a neutral attitude due to a limited understanding of complex political issues. Many participants admitted that it was difficult to follow the dynamics between the Constitutional Court's decision and the revision of the Election Law, especially given the rapid flow of information that was hard to understand and sometimes even contradictory. This indicates a gap in political literacy. Although students are digitally active, not all have the same capacity to understand the substance of political issues in depth.

"Honestly, I don't understand the tragedy. The Constitutional Court's decision, the revision of the law, and corruption, it felt like at that time, there was too much information coming to me. I've tried searching, but I still don't understand because it's a bit complex for me. Of course, what I understand is that this country is not doing well." (P301)

Fear of Missing Out in the Peringatan Darurat Movement (8.40%)

This theme shows students' critical views on the virality of the symbol *Peringatan Darurat* on social media. Some students consider that public involvement is often driven by *fear of missing out* (FOMO), rather than by substantive understanding. In this context, digital activism is perceived as a strategy that enables rapid mobilization but is vulnerable to the simplification of political issues and the reproduction of opinions without critical reflection.

"I think it's a Fomo thing because the average friend I ask about the Peringatan Darurat just goes along, and I don't go along because it's not my field" (P399)

Emotional Response: Shocked, Anxious, and Concerned (7.20%)

Some students express strong emotional responses when confronted with *Peringatan Darurat*. Feelings of surprise, anxiety, and concern arise in response to a perceived political situation marked by uncertainty. This emotion does not always lead to political action, but often encourages the search for information and personal reflection on the nation's condition.

"We are also concerned about the condition of democracy in Indonesia, which is easily manipulated by state officials just to carry out all their goals." (P279)

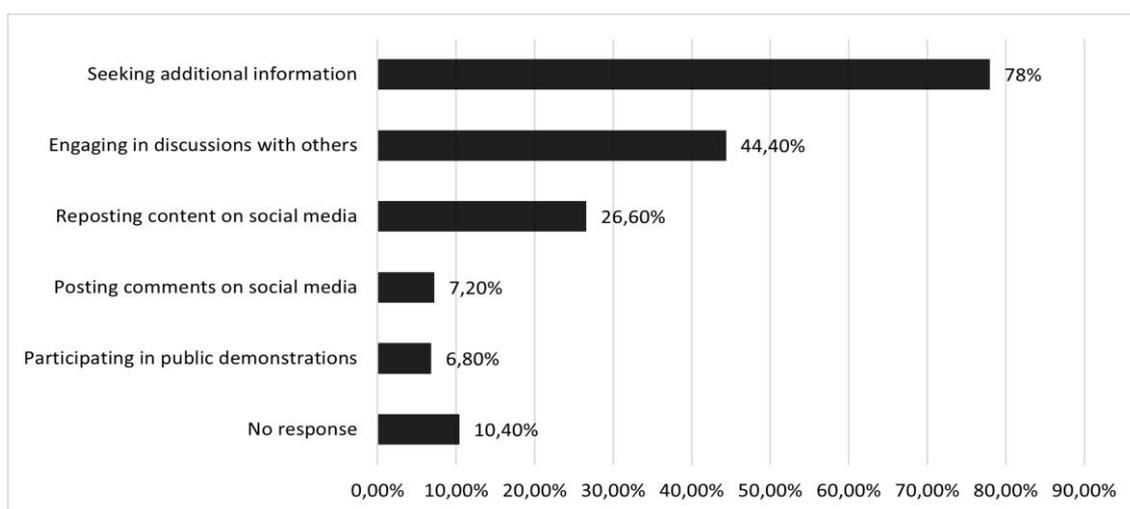
Negative View of the Peringatan Darurat Movement (4.00%)

The last theme reflects skepticism and rejection of *Peringatan Darurat*. A small number of students consider this movement excessive, irrelevant, or just a form of manipulating public opinion. This attitude shows resistance to the dominant narrative and distrust of political symbols circulating online.

"It is not useful, leading public opinion into negative matters where there is not necessarily any truth in the matter" (P460)

Student Responses and the Reasons Behind Them

In addition to meaning, this study also reveals the form of student response to the movement of *Peringatan Darurat*. In general, the most dominant responses were in the individual-digital realm, especially seeking further information (78.00%). This pattern shows students' tendency to be cautious and reflective before taking political positions. Practice *Repost* Social media also stands out (26.60%), indicating its role as a space for expression and the dissemination of political awareness. In contrast, involvement in street actions, such as demonstrations, was relatively limited (6.80%), while passive or non-responsive attitudes (10.40%) persisted among some students. Overall, these findings show that students' political responses are more mediated by digital spaces than open physical spaces. The reasons behind the response will be explained further in the thematic explanation.



Graph 1. Student Response to the *Peringatan Darurat* Movement

Seeking Information as a Strategy for Finding the Truth and Satisfying Curiosity

Most students show a strong orientation to obtaining information considered valid before taking a stand against the *Peringatan Darurat* movement. This movement is perceived as a sensitive political momentum, prone to being twisted, hijacked by certain interests, or spread inaccurately through social media. This awareness encourages students not to react immediately but to first search for more credible sources of information, compare various news reports, and verify the context and facts circulating. This cautious attitude reflects the experience of some students (though not all) in dealing with the rapid, often uncontrolled flow of digital information. Many students believe that political participation should be based on adequate understanding to avoid contributing to the spread of misinformation. Thus, the search for information is understood as an important and responsible first step in responding to political issues.

"Because in my opinion, the information conveyed is not necessarily the truth and validity, therefore I thought of waiting for follow-up information. Because many now use social media as a place to spread hoaxes that harm the community." (P171)

In addition to caution, *curiosity* also emerged as a prominent motive in student involvement. The virality of the *Peringatan Darurat* sparked students' desire to understand what really happened and the current political background and dynamics. This impulse is not always reactive or momentary, but is often the gateway to further political learning processes. For some students, the search for information is not only aimed at satisfying curiosity but also at assessing whether the issue is relevant to their social and political lives. Thus, student involvement often starts from personal interest, which then develops into political awareness.

"Because I want to know more about this incident, and I also want to hear other people's opinions about this incident" (P243)

Discussion as a Means of Understanding Issues and Expanding Alternative Perspectives

After obtaining initial information, some students emphasized the importance of discussing with the people closest to them, such as friends, family, or the community. Discussions are seen as a means to understand the complexity of issues and expand alternative perspectives. Through discussion, students feel better able to understand issues from various perspectives and weigh the consequences that may arise. These findings show that the processing of political issues among college students often occurs socially, not solely individually. In this context, students who discuss with individuals considered more knowledgeable about politics feel they gain additional insights that help them assess the issue more carefully.

"Discussing with people around me can make me gather perspectives, especially when discussing with people who are more politically savvy, can educate me about the implications of policy change" (P388)

Digital Activism and Demonstrations as Expressions of Aspiration and Belonging

Students not only stop at the stage of information consumption and interpretation, but also tend to express attitudes through various forms of participation. Digital activism, such as resharing uploads or disseminating information related to *Peringatan Darurat*, is a relatively popular option. This form of participation is seen as easy, fast, and with a wide potential reach, allowing students to voice their concerns without being directly involved in physical activities.

"I reposted the upload on social media so that people would know what was happening in Indonesia and hopefully they would also care about the critical condition of Indonesia at that time" (P385)

On the other hand, some students choose offline involvement, such as participating in demonstrations, as a way to demonstrate a firmer political commitment. Demonstrations are understood as a means of collectively expressing aspirations and showing dissatisfaction with the ongoing political conditions. Involvement in these actions is often attributed to the belief that massive public pressure can increase the likelihood that policymakers will hear people's aspirations.

"The demonstration is a step that shows further commitment. When protests are large in number, the voices of people demanding justice are more likely to be heard. It also sends a strong message to the government that society cannot be ignored and democracy cannot be just rhetoric." (P180)

Some students associate digital activism and demonstrations with concern for democratic conditions and national political direction. The political situation is perceived as alarming, prompting a sense of moral responsibility to avoid indifference. This concern is reflected in efforts, both small and large, to voice hopes for the nation's future.

"As a form of concern because this nation is not good, and I feel that I have to enliven the concerns of democracy even with small steps." (P416)

Silence because you feel disinterested and irrelevant

On the other hand, the data also shows that some students choose not to be involved or keep their distance from the *Peringatan Darurat* movement. This disinterest arises for various reasons, such as a lack of interest in politics, difficulty understanding complex issues, or the perception that these political dynamics do not have a direct impact on their personal lives. For this group, political involvement is not a priority, so they choose to remain passive or neutral.

"Not very interested. Because I feel that I am not harmed or benefited by the news." (P350)

Figure 1 briefly shows the dynamics of *student political engagement* in response to the *Peringatan Darurat* movement amid political uncertainty. This movement is interpreted by students through four main dimensions, namely cognitive-normative, participatory, affective-ambivalent, and resistive. These four dimensions of meaning form a variety of student responses, which are divided into online political engagement, offline political engagement, and political disengagement.

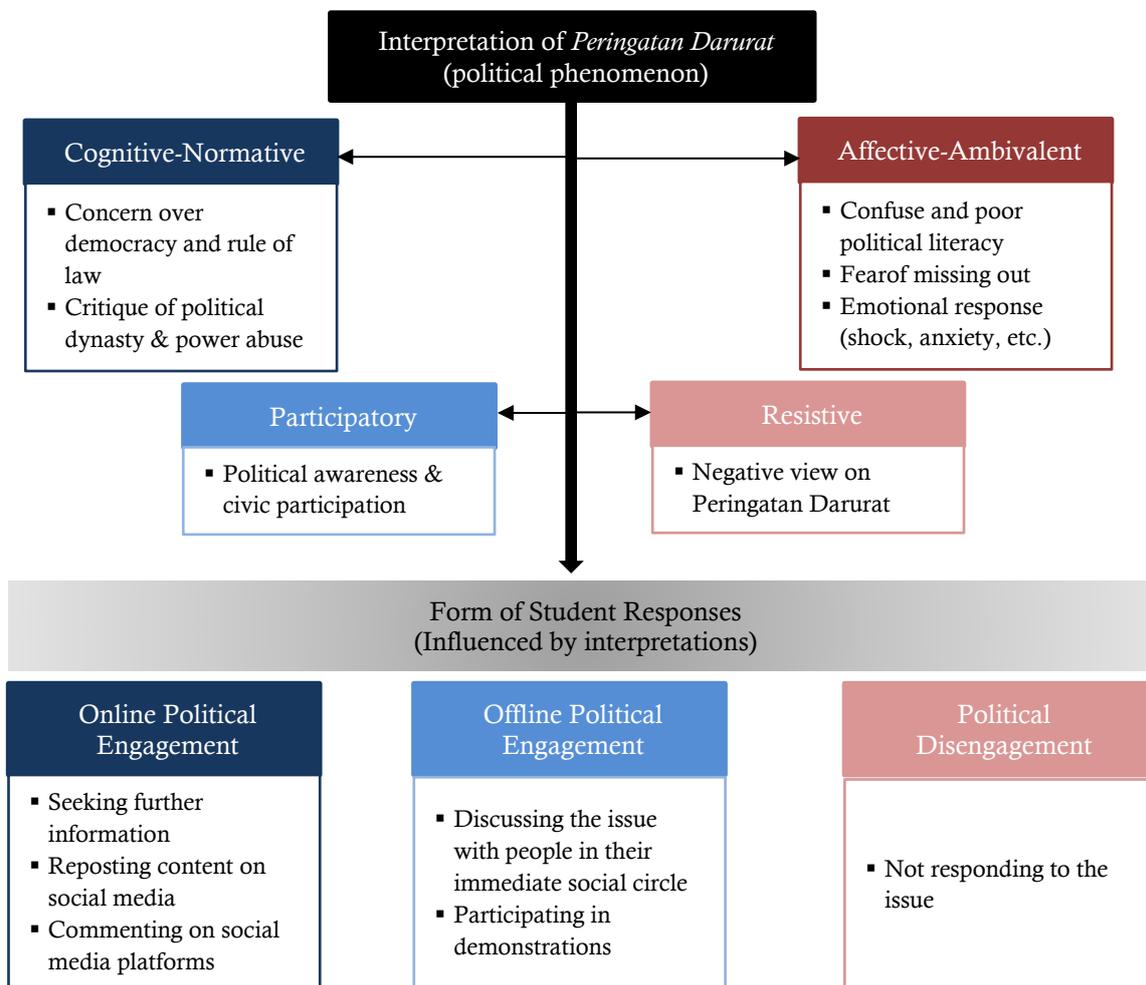


Figure 1. Research Findings Chart

Based on these results, this study identified three main findings that provide a picture of student political engagement in the *Peringatan Darurat* movement amid political uncertainty. **First**, students interpret the *Peringatan Darurat* movement through four main dimensions: cognitive-normative, participatory, affective-ambivalent, and resistive. In the cognitive-normative dimension, students interpret the *Peringatan Darurat* movement as a marker of political conditions perceived as precarious, especially

threats to democracy and the rule of law, the perpetuation of dynastic politics, and the abuse of power. The dominance of themes of concern about the weakening of democracy (26.80%) and criticism of the perpetuation of dynastic politics and abuse of power (20.40%) indicates that students interpret this phenomenon through a normative and evaluative lens. The movement is understood not only as a viral phenomenon in the digital space, but also as a symbol of the vigilance of students and other civil society against the legal-procedural political practices of members of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia who are perceived to be trying to play with the Constitutional Court's decision regarding the minimum age limit and the threshold for the candidacy of regional heads. This interpretation aligns with the study of democratic backsliding, which shows that the decline of contemporary democracy often occurs through the manipulation of rules, legal reinterpretation, and procedural changes that appear formally legitimate but, in essence, harm democratic principles (Bermeo, 2016; Lührmann & Lindberg, 2019). This kind of practice generally occurs gradually and implicitly, making it difficult to directly recognize it as a threat to democracy (Waldner & Lust, 2018). In the Indonesian context, as Mietzner (2024) notes, political elites tend to maintain power through collusive means and institutional negotiations while still claiming compliance with applicable procedures.

In the participatory dimension, students interpret the *Peringatan Darurat movement* as a symbolic space that emphasizes the importance of political awareness and civic participation as a normative orientation in responding to political uncertainty. In the framework of *Uncertainty–Identity Theory*, this orientation can be understood as an effort to reduce political uncertainty perceived as threatening the stability of social values and identities (Hogg, 2012; Hogg & Wagoner, 2017). When the actions of the political elite are seen as deviating from the basic principles of democracy, students interpret this movement as a means of affirming a pro-democracy social identity. The narrative that positions the movement as a democracy alarm reflects how students see themselves as a young, educated, critical generation with a moral responsibility for the sustainability of democracy. In the context of power sharing in Indonesia, this position is interpreted as aligning with the ideal role of students as part of civil society, functioning as a balancer and supervisor of power (Savirani, 2025).

In the affective-ambivalent dimension, students interpret the *Peringatan Darurat movement* through strong emotional responses, accompanied by confusion and cognitive uncertainty. This response is reflected in feelings of shock, anxiety, and concern, intertwined with the limitations of political literacy and the *fear of missing out*. Students are aware of the significance of the issues raised, but at the same time see themselves as lacking an adequate understanding to form a firm political position. In the framework of *Uncertainty–Identity Theory*, this condition reflects political uncertainty that has not been successfully reduced cognitively, so that the process of group identification and orientation to meaning remains temporary and fragile (Hogg, 2012; Hogg & Wagoner, 2017). This affective-ambivalent interpretation suggests that student involvement sometimes stops at a reflective and emotional level without developing into a more stable political orientation.

In the resistive dimension, students interpret the *Peringatan Darurat movement* as a political arena that is perceived as high-risk and full of uncertainty. Skepticism and a tendency to keep a distance emerged from a reflective assessment that political engagement posed greater potential harm than perceived benefits. Concerns about misinformation, dissent, and the long-term consequences of digital footprints shape the meaning that non-participation is seen as a safer option psychologically and identity (Dey & Dey, 2025). In the perspective of *Uncertainty–Identity Theory*, this resistance can be understood as a form of *identity disengagement*, which is an individual's interpretive strategy to protect psychological stability and self-identity coherence when political uncertainty is perceived as too high and difficult to reduce (Hogg, 2012; Hogg, 2024).

Overall, these findings suggest that political uncertainty results in a diverse spectrum of meanings in the way students understand the *Peringatan Darurat* movement. Students do not interpret this movement alone, but through a normative interpretation of the democratic crisis, participatory orientation as a civic ideal, ambivalent emotional responses, and resistive attitudes as a form of

identity protection. Thus, this movement is understood as an interpretive arena that reflects the complexity of the relationship between political uncertainty, social identity, and the construction of meaning for *student political engagement*.

Second, the students' response to the *Peringatan Darurat* movement shows the variety and intensity of the form of *student political engagement*, with a clear dominance in the realm of individual and digital-based engagement. Involvement in information-seeking activities and digital activism through social media emerged as the most prominent form, while involvement in offline actions such as demonstrations was relatively limited. This pattern shows that *political engagement* among students tends to be situational, flexible, and intersects with daily digital communication practices, rather than related to long-term commitments based on formal movement or organizational structures.

This pattern is in line with the concept of *digitally networked participation* (Theocharis, 2015), where political participation takes place through a fluid digital communication network and blends into daily communication routines. These findings are also consistent with the concept of *connective action* (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012), which emphasizes that political expression is personalized and does not rely on tightly institutionalized collective identities. Activities such as *reposts*, the use of *story templates*, or short expression of opinions on social media show how students use the Garuda Biru symbol as a means to articulate political attitudes easily, concisely, and with relatively minimal risk. In this context, the symbol serves as a *boundary object* that allows for broad participation without demanding involvement in a formal movement structure. These findings are in line with Vieira et al. (2024), who show that digital activism plays an important role in building collective meaning and expanding the visibility of issues in online public spaces.

In addition to digital activism, students also have discussions with the nearest social environment such as friends, family, or individuals who are considered to understand politics better. These discussions serve as a space for clarification, negotiation of meaning, and exchange of perspectives, so that students' political meanings are not completely individual. Although *political engagement* is largely mediated by the digital space, the process of interpretation and understanding still takes place socially and relationally. This confirms that the meaning of the *Peringatan Darurat movement* is built through social interaction as well as personal reflection.

Third, the reasons behind each form of student involvement are diverse and complex, reflecting the way they interpret the *Peringatan Darurat movement*. The dominance of information seeking shows that students consider it important to assess issues clearly and avoid involvement that is perceived as premature or risky. Discussions with social circles, such as friends, family, or individuals who are considered to understand politics, become a means of exchanging information and perspectives that help them interpret the truth and relevance of information. These findings confirm that *student political engagement* is not only manifested in public expression, but also in interaction with the immediate social environment (Head et al., 2019). Within the framework of *Uncertainty–Identity Theory*, this strategy can be understood as an epistemic effort to reduce political uncertainty while maintaining one's identity as a critical and responsible political subject (Hogg, 2012; Hogg & Wagoner, 2017). Thus, information seeking and discussion are not only cognitive activities but also identity practices that affirm students' position in civil society as careful responders to public issues.

Furthermore, the difference in the meaning of the issue, resulting from reduced uncertainty, led to variations in student responses. For some students, a clearer understanding of the intricacies of the movement encourages expression of attitudes through digital activism and participation in demonstrations. Digital activism was chosen because it allows for the articulation of moral and political identities in a relatively safe and flexible manner, while demonstrations are understood as a more robust and confrontational form of collective identity affirmation, in which commitment to certain values is expressed openly through collective action (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013; van Zomeren et al., 2018; Jia & Fee, 2025). On the other hand, for some other students, the choice to remain silent or keep their distance from the movement reflects a form of *identity disengagement*. When issues are perceived as too complex and less personally relevant, withdrawal serves as a protective strategy to

maintain psychological stability and coherence of self-identity (Hogg, 2012; Hogg, 2024). These findings confirm that non-participation is not necessarily synonymous with apathy, but can be understood as a rational response to political uncertainty that cannot be adequately reduced.

CONCLUSIONS

This research shows that students interpret the *Peringatan Darurat* movement as a political symbol that represents a precarious political situation, particularly threats to democracy and the rule of law, including efforts to perpetuate dynastic politics and abuse of power. However, this meaning is not singular. Some students see this movement as a trigger for increased awareness and political participation, while others are confused or even judge it negatively. This diversity of meanings is further reflected in the diverse student responses, which are dominated by digital-based individual engagement, such as information seeking and digital activism through social media, while offline engagement, such as demonstrations, is relatively limited. This pattern shows that, in situations of political uncertainty, student political engagement is more mediated by the digital space and is realized through selective actions, resulting from negotiations among the meaning of the issue, individual capacity, and perceptions of political involvement risks.

Using *Uncertainty–Identity Theory*, this study contributes to the theory by showing that political uncertainty serves as a dual trigger of student *political engagement*. On the one hand, uncertainty can activate *political engagement* grounded in social identity and democratic values; on the other hand, it can also encourage political disengagement as a protective identity strategy when individuals perceive their cognitive and affective resources as inadequate. These findings affirm the importance of understanding *student political engagement* as part of contextual social identity in the era of digital democracy, while challenging normative assumptions that equate low mass mobilization with weak *political engagement*.

As a survey-based qualitative study that focuses on a specific political event in Indonesia, this study has limitations in capturing the dynamics of changing meanings and student responses over time and across different political contexts. Therefore, the findings of this study should be understood as a contextual picture, not a comprehensive representation of Indonesian students' political behavior. Further research can develop these findings through longitudinal designs, mixed-methodological approaches, or the exploration of other political contexts to deepen understanding of student *political engagement* in situations of democratic uncertainty.

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