

## Youth Political and Social Media Engagement for 2024 Indonesian General Elections

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**ABSTRAK:** Indonesia memasuki babak baru politik di bawah kepemimpinan Presiden Prabowo Subianto didampingi Wakil Presiden Gibran Rakabuming Raka. Pasangan ini menang pada Pemilu 2024, dengan perolehan suara 58,6% di mana mayoritas dipilih pemilih muda. Memang pada Pemilu 2024 lalu, jumlah pemilih muda usia 22-30 tahun merupakan kelompok pemilih dengan jumlah terbanyak. Sebanyak 114 juta jiwa pemilih yang merupakan Generasi Millennial dan Generasi Z, terbukti mampu mengubah kebijakan politik di negeri ini selama lima tahun ke depan. Separuh dari jumlah pemilih muda tadi merupakan pemilih pemula yang baru pertama kali menggunakan hak suaranya. Sebelum pesta demokrasi dilaksanakan, banyak keraguan akan keberadaan anak-anak muda ini mengingat karakter Gen Z dan Millennial dikenal sebagai generasi yang adaptif dan responsif sehingga akan berpengaruh pada sikap dan perilaku mereka. Mereka juga dikenal tidak berminat pada isu politik, namun diperkirakan akan berubah berdasarkan konten media sosial yang dilihat. Akibatnya isu polarisasi, misinformasi, dan disinformasi di media sosial pun membayangi selama periode penyelenggaraan Pemilu. Penelitian ini menggunakan konsep *youth political* dan *social media engagement* untuk mencapai tujuan mengetahui bagaimana para pemilih muda ini menggunakan media sosial untuk mencari informasi terkait calon pemimpin yang jujur dan antikorupsi. Penelitian ini juga menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode penelitian fenomenologi. Data yang dikumpulkan adalah data kualitatif dan kuantitatif. Data kualitatif yang dikumpulkan adalah data kualitatif yang bersumber dari wawancara 2 orang orang Generasi Z, sedangkan data kuantitatif yang bersumber dari penyebaran survey secara *online* terhadap 114 Generasi Z mengenai penggunaan media sosial untuk kampanye politik. Hasil survey ini berfungsi sebagai data pendukung. Hasil penelitian menyebutkan, pemilih muda sangat tergantung pada algoritma yang berjalan di akun media sosial untuk mendapatkan informasi seputar calon yang dipilih di Pemilihan Umum. Selain itu, mereka juga terbantu dengan kehadiran *For Your Page* (FYP) yang bersliweran di media sosial, meski konten yang mereka sukai tergolong misinformasi dan disinformasi.

**Kata kunci:** misinformasi, disinformasi, kampanye politik, Pemilu, Gen Z

**ABSTRACT:** Indonesia has entered a new chapter of politics under the leadership of President Prabowo Subianto and Vice President Gibran Rakabuming Raka. The pair won unanimously in the 2024 General Election, with 58.6% of the vote, the majority of which went to young voters. Indeed, in the 2024 elections, the number of young voters aged 22-30 years was the largest group of voters. A total of 114 million voters, who are millennials and Generation Z, have proven to be able to change political policies in this country for the next 5 years. Half of these young voters are first-time voters. Before the democratic party was held, there were many doubts about the existence of these young people considering the character of Gen Z and millennials is

*known as an adaptive and responsive generation that will affect their attitudes and behavior. They are also known to be disinterested in political issues, but this is expected to change based on the social media content they see. As a result, issues of polarization, misinformation, and disinformation on social media loomed during the election period. This research uses the concepts of youth politics and social media engagement to achieve the goal of knowing how these young voters use social media to find information related to honest and anti-corruption leadership candidates. This research also uses a qualitative approach with a phenomenology research method and data collection as qualitative and quantitative data. The qualitative data was collected from interviews with 2 Generation Z, while quantitative data was collected sourced from distributing an online survey to 114 Generation Z regarding the use of social media for political campaigns. This refers as amplifier data. The results of the study stated that young voters are very dependent on algorithms running on social media accounts to get information about candidates to be elected in the General Election. In addition, they are also helped by the presence of For Your Page (FYP) on social media, although the content they prefer is classified as misinformation and disinformation.*

**Keywords:** *misinformation, disinformation, political campaign, general elections, Gen Z*

## INTRODUCTION

The General Election of the Republic of Indonesia was held simultaneously in 2024. These elections are divided into two stages. The first stage, presidential elections and legislative elections (DPR, DPRD, and DPD) was held on February 14, 2024. Furthermore, the second stage, simultaneous regional head elections was held on November 27, 2024. One interesting aspect of the 2024 elections was that young people (aged 22-30) dominated the total national electorate, accounting for 56.4%, or around 114 million. This means that half of them are first-time voters. However, the question is whether they voted or not. According to research done by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in August 2022, young voters participated in the 2019 election at 91.3%, up from 85.9% in 2014. Unfortunately, when surveyed, only 1.1% of young people were interested in politics. Many young voters are reluctant and pessimistic about the political climate, and they do not trust political figures (theconversation.com, 2023).

Young people in Indonesia also tend to be considered apathetic towards political developments and are not as nationalistic as other generations in the country. Young voters are also perceived as not being easily influenced by their family or close friends' preference for certain candidates. This is different from the phenomenon that occurred in previous elections, where the power of family political choices greatly influenced young

people at that time. For this reason, and because of the large number of young voters in the 2024 elections, political parties and potential candidates began implementing campaign strategies through social media to attract these young voters (Chen & Syailendra, 2014).

## Political Participatory of Gen Z in Indonesia

In Bolton et al. (2013), there are four generational classifications using birth: Generation X (1961-1980), Generation Y (1981-1990), and Generation Z (1991 and later). Generation Z is the first generation to have widely available internet technology, and they have been exposed to technology like never before in their formative years, thanks to the web revolution that took place in the 1990s. Gen Z is naturally very comfortable with technology, so interacting on social media websites is an important part of their socializing behavior. Gen Z has strong 'virtual bonds', and this helps these young people to escape the emotional and psychological struggles they face offline. Early, regular, exposure to technology has been found to influence Gen Z in terms of rational, sentimental, and social consequences (Bolton et al., 2013).

Gen Z is described as a generation of digital natives who use these skills to actively participate in politics. The population of Generation Z in Indonesia is quite large. Data from the Central Bureau of Statistics in 2020 shows that 27.94% of

Indonesia's population consists of Generation Z. Most of them are first-timers in Indonesia's electoral process. Others are those who have been involved in political participation in elections once. The results of the Kompas R & D survey for the January 2023 period, which focused on Generation Z, noted three phenomena in their political participation. First, the enthusiasm rate of Generation Z in political participation is 67.8 percent. Second, as many as 8.6 percent of respondents from Generation Z intended to use their voting rights in the 2024 election only for the presidential election, not for others such as legislative candidates or parties. Third, Generation Z also did not want to be part of a group that was antipathetic to the election process or become a white group (Kompas.com, 2023).

Social media activities related to politics carried out by Generation Z are also quite diverse, including: reading various posts related to elections, reading news articles or other information (such as opinions) related to elections, reading comments related to elections, watching videos related to elections, and also visiting pages or profiles of politicians or public figures in the context of elections.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Gen Z and Social Media Engagement

According to Solling Hamid et al. (2022), social media allows politicians (candidates, government officials, and political party members) to establish and influence public opinion. Social media improves the effectiveness of political campaigns and information transmission.

The quality of content presentation also influences social media's reputation. Given the huge amount of data available on social media, consumers are affected by a significant degree of knowledge asymmetry and information overload when it comes to marketing. Trust can boost the quality and legitimacy of social media by giving precise and reliable information. Social media is also thought to improve communication between candidates and voters, offer considerable benefits, and influence political decisions (Alfiyani, 2018).

Social media can influence not just

people's lifestyles and habits, but also how they perceive the world through diverse values and ideas. But sometimes, individuals have difficulty facing the challenges to be able to accept the thoughts of others. This is because the bombardment of various discussions that appear on the internet often positions individuals in an identity crisis (Sandel & Ju, 2019).

Several studies have demonstrated that social media may impact people's senses of self and self-presentation. In their book *Introduction to Digital Media*, Delfanti & Arvidsson (2019) place their subject in an American context and define in great detail how social media contributes to the process of identity creation and reshaping, comparing it to a stage that allows people to 'act'.

Meanwhile, Guta & Karolak (2015) researched Saudi Arabian women's use of social media, specifically how they use this virtual space to express and negotiate their identities. Similarly, van Dijk (2013) research looked into how various online platforms, such as Facebook and LinkedIn, might shape social media users' personal and professional identities (Gandana & Oktaviandy, 2021).

### Gen Z and Political Engagement

A political engagement is a form of civic involvement that focuses on the direct impact of political issues, systems, and structures. Political engagement is defined as cognitive and behavioral involvement in a political setting (Gibson, 2017). The political engagement is divided into two, namely cognitive and active (Alfaruqy & Padmonurcahyo, 2023). Cognitive political engagement is an intense focus of one's attention and thoughts on the political system. For example, searching for information on national and political topics, as well as affiliating with a specific party. Active political engagement refers to a person's activity, such as contacting officials and taking part in campaigns.

Alfaruqy & Padmonurcahyo (2023) mention six aspects that build political engagement, namely contacting, campaign engagement, voting, community engagement, digital engagement, and activism. According to Waeterloos et al. (2021), political participation is divided into five types, namely latent engagement, counter engagement,

sharing engagement and follower engagement, and expressive engagement. This latent involvement is more about the behaviour of reading, watching, and visiting election-related news pages. Meanwhile, Gen Z is also likely to engage in controversial political behaviours, including hate speech, and cyberbullying. There are also cybercrime actions such as: illegal access, illegal interception, data interference, and misuse of data (Azad et al., 2017). There are also cybercrime actions such as: illegal access, illegal interception, data interference, and misuse of data (Mohammad Azad et al., 2017). This is in line with Waeterloos et al., (2021) opinion that some social media users behave in a way that breaks into someone's account to get information about an election, breaks into someone's account to write something on their behalf about an election, spreads someone's personal information (e.g. phone number, address) without their permission in the context of an election and does something with someone's personal information spread on social media in the context of an election (e.g. sending a text). These controversial behaviours are referred to as counter-engagement.

In addition to counteracting activities, political participation on social media can take the form of sharing behaviour, spreading the existence of an event on social media or inviting people to it in an electoral context, having intentions or indicating that they will attend or be interested in an event on social media in an electoral context. election context. They are also likely to sign certain election-themed petitions after seeing them on social media. Gen Z has been known to be active in protest movements driven through social media. In addition, they often share petitions about elections organized by others and become members of certain social media groups regarding election activities. The behaviour of following various activities on social media related to this is referred to as follower engagement (Waeterloos et al. 2021).

In addition to the three types of engagement above, there is also expressive engagement which influences the behaviour of expressing participation in social media even in limited groups (Waeterloos et al., 2021), including writing or sharing something (status, memes, and links) about the election, commenting on something about the election, liking something or reacting

with emotion to something about the election, all of which are shared in closed social media groups. In addition, more expressive social media political participation is also realized by sending something related to the election to someone in a private message on social media, trolling, commenting on something about the election in a publicly visible way, and posting news or sharing something (statuses, memes and links) about the election in a publicly visible way in (Harsono, 2023).

## RESEARCH METHOD

This research used a qualitative approach with a phenomenology research method. The interview process has been conducted through 2 students classified as Generation Z with open interviews. The questions asked were more of an effort to further elaborate on the answers obtained from the previous online questionnaire. Before conducting this interview stage, the researcher shared a questionnaire involving 114 Generation Z members in Indonesia. They are university students, high school and junior high school students who were born between 1997 and 2011. The data collection techniques used were online questionnaires and individual interviews. The questionnaire was distributed to get an overview of social engagement in the use of social media by Gen Z. In this technique, researchers gained insight into the views and actions taken by Gen Z in using social media, especially for politically affiliated activities. The online questionnaire distributed was in the form of closed questions with several answer options. Furthermore, individual interview sessions were conducted with 2 respondents whose answers to the questionnaire needed further exploration. All respondents did not reveal their full identity.

The questions that appeared in the online questionnaire were about social engagement and political engagement carried out by Gen Z in Indonesia. The questionnaire consisted of 17 questions, which were divided into 3 sections. First, a basic information section consisting of 3 questions related to year of birth, gender, and daily activities. Second, a section on social media usage among Gen Z. There are 5 questions about how many types

of social media are owned, how long the average usage time per day is, the purpose of using social media, knowledge of media literacy, and the most effective way of educating through social media. The third section is about social engagement. There are 5 questions consisting of a comparison between the offline and digital world, computer algorithms, hate speech, creating interesting social media content, the importance of social interaction in the real world, and finally the political engagement section which consists of 4 questions. This section was only intended for respondents who were voters in the 2024 elections, namely 83 respondents.

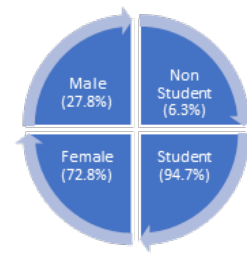
The questions asked related to interest in politics, how to get information about candidates to be elected, forms of public participation in politics on social media, how to recognize misinformation-disinformation ahead of the political year. All questions were asked in Bahasa Indonesia by fulfilling the rules of good and correct Bahasa Indonesia. As for the open system interview with 2 students, the questions asked were more of an effort to further elaborate on the answers obtained from the previous online questionnaire. The questions included: How do you express yourself on social media? Do you feel that social media has made you more critical? Do you think social media has a more beneficial or negative influence? What kind of emotions and conflicts do you encounter when you use social media? The questions were asked in Bahasa Indonesia and the interview was conducted via WhatsApp messaging.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Gen Z and Social Engagement

This section describes the findings regarding the use of social media among Generation Z, which includes basic information consisting of 3 questions related to year of birth, gender, and daily activities. Of the 114 responses received, it is known that the largest number of respondents were students born in 2002-2005, which amounted to 93 percent. This means that most respondents belong to the young voter group, who voted for the first time in the 2024 elections. Most of the respondents were female, which amounted to 72.8 percent. This can be

explained that the number of women in Indonesia is almost the same as the number of men in Indonesia. The Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) in 2022 noted that the sex ratio of the Indonesian population reached 102.2. This means that in every population of 100 women, there are approximately 102 men. A sex ratio of 100 represents a balance between the number of men and women (Data Indonesia, 2021). The majority of respondents also consisted of students, namely 94.7 percent.



Picture 1. Demographics of Gen Z's Social Media  
Source: Authors, 2024

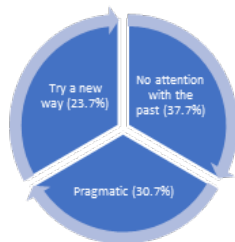
The next section is related to the use of social media among Gen Z, namely how many types of social media are owned, how long the average usage time per day is, the purpose of using social media, knowledge about media literacy, and the most effective way of educating through social media. From the 114 responses, it is known that 68.4 percent of respondents have 2-5 social media accounts, while 27.2 percent have more than 5 social media accounts. This is quite astonishing because these young people find that talking about their problems online is easier than talking in person. However, their freedom to talk about their problems is now starting to be silenced because of the unpleasant responses given by individuals of the same generation.

The solution that Gen Z came up with is to create a second social media account that is only open to those closest to them and the content is very different from their main social media account. this account is commonly referred to as a rant account, which contains their complaints about the problems they face. Another solution is to create an anonymous account with no followers at all or with strangers who share similar hobbies or interests, who then become their online friends. Although they are technically strangers, the 'community' they created makes them feel comfortable talking about

problems with each other (Salsabila, 2023).

Regarding social engagement to access social media for Generation Z, the majority of respondents mentioned looking for information and the latest news (47.4 percent), getting to know idol public figures and influencers (25.4 percent), listening to music (10.5 percent) and playing online games (5.3 percent). Regarding effective ways of digital literacy, 51.8 percent of respondents answered in the form of interesting visuals, 25.4 percent of respondents answered using easy-to-understand language and 14.9 percent chose to use videos and memes.

Interestingly, most Gen Zs have an interest in finding out the details of things through various means both offline and online, for example, things in the past where they were not yet born (37.7 percent). Others are more pragmatic about certain things, as they think not everything is worth knowing (30.7 percent). Another group is moved to try to find out something in detail through their way (23.7 percent).

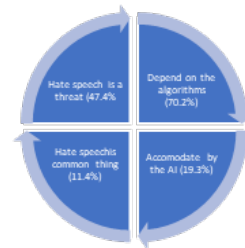


Picture 2. Social Media Attractiveness for Gen Z  
Source: Authors, 2024

Regarding artificial intelligence such as algorithms, these young respondents are helped by the existence of algorithms as a form of technological progress (70.2 percent). They are well aware that artificial intelligence will greatly help accommodate their interests (19.3 percent).

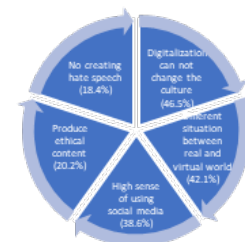
This is in line with Gen Z's confidence in addressing manipulative content and hate speech on social media, where 47.4 percent of respondents consider hate speech as something that can divide the nation's unity. However, as many as 11.4 percent of respondents consider it a common thing in this post-modern era. Meanwhile, the forms of social engagement carried out by Gen Z are a sense of responsibility in managing social media (38.6 percent), producing ethical social media content

(20.2 percent), and not creating hate speech (18.4 percent).



Picture 3. Gen Z's Trust to AI and Hate Speech  
Source: Authors, 2024

In terms of social engagement, 46.5 percent of respondents felt that although the virtual world has become a modern lifestyle, it does not mean that digitalization can change the culture that has long existed (46.5 percent). 42.1 percent of respondents also believe that not all cultures or social interactions are conducted in the virtual world.



Picture 4. Gen Z's Trust to Virtual World  
Source: Authors, 2024

This was emphasized by one of the student respondents, Fiona (20 years old), in relation to the confusion and inner conflict she had experienced when using social media.

"When I was involved in social media, there were some inner conflicts that I experienced, such as thinking, do we have to follow trends every time we use social media so that we are not left behind and still exist on social media?"

This statement shows that social media can be effective in changing not only an individual's lifestyle and habits but also how they see the world through different values and ideas. Sometimes, however, individuals struggle with the challenges of accepting the thoughts of others, resulting in an

identity crisis for Gen Z. Social media can influence an individual's sense of self and self-presentation as it can contribute to the process of identity formation and reshaping. Social media can also function as a stage that allows people to 'perform' as well as a virtual space used as a tool to express and negotiate their identity.

### Gen Z and Political Engagement

In this section, we will discuss the questionnaire questions related to political engagement among Gen Z, related to the question of how the information sources have chosen to get information about the 2024 General Election online. Total of 31.3 percent of respondents chose social media as the new media and alternative media popular among gen Z. Some respondents also mentioned that they get information according to the media and For Your Page algorithms offered by social media. The most basic political engagement was also asked in this questionnaire. As many as 53 percent of respondents admitted that they were not interested in politics. However, they do not rule out the possibility of participating in politics if the opportunity arises. A total of 27.7 percent of respondents admitted that they were not interested in being part of the dirty political game in Indonesia and would continue to be government watchdogs. As many as 12 percent of respondents choose where the wind blows when determining their interest in politics. Only 7.2 percent of respondents aspire to be part of the country's political system.

"I personally frankly am not interested in politics because there are many intrigues and unexpected events. friends can become opponents and opponents can become friends."

Regarding forms of public participation, 31.6 percent of respondents admitted that they were active in commenting on the social media accounts of presidential and vice-presidential candidates. As many as 26.6 percent actively create social media content in the form of political memes. As many as 17.7 percent of respondents actively organize live online political discussions. With the active public participation of Gen Z on social media,

it raises the question of how they overcome the various hoaxes, misinformation, and disinformation that are widely circulated on social media ahead of the political year. A total of 34.9 percent of respondents answered that they regularly check with credible fact-checking accounts. As many as 31.3 percent of respondents usually check the history of content from social media accounts. As many as 22.9 percent of respondents admitted that they used to check information from social media, whether it was reported by the mainstream media, but as many as 8.4 percent of respondents admitted that they did not know and did not want to know about hoaxes and hate speech.

This was conveyed in more detail by one of the student respondents, Angel (20 years old), regarding the emotional changes or critical thinking experienced in using social media.

"I feel that I have become a more critical person on social media because of the frequent occurrence of false information spread on social media, which requires filtering information before disseminating it to other friends."

Political engagement is categorized into two categories: cognitive and active. Cognitive political engagement is an intense focus of one's attention and thoughts on the political system. For example, seeking information on national issues and identifying with a specific party.

"I know we young people are accused of being able to do many things with social media content, including creating and spreading hate speech. But we know the ethical limits of its use."

Gen Z youths are proven to have conducted cognitive political engagement through commenting on the social media accounts of presidential and vice presidential candidates. In addition, they also participate in organizing virtual discussions on political themes as part of educating the public so that they do not make the wrong choice. Meanwhile, active political engagement refers to a person's actions, such as contacting officials or taking part in campaigns. Alfaryuq & Padmonurcahyo (2023) identify six variables that

contribute to political engagement: contacting, campaign engagement, voting, community engagement, digital engagement, and activism.

This is clearly done by gen Z who actively build relationships with constituents and candidates to be elected or political parties. They also feel more critical on social media than in normal situations. Gen Z members are also active in combating hoaxes and hate speech on social media, and try to make their fellow peer groups aware so that they do not take the wrong steps in the 2024 elections.

## CONCLUSION

This research shows that the role and influence of social media for Generation Z young people is enormous. This is because, since birth, generation Z has never had the opportunity to intersect with each of them having a strong identity. These Gen Zs are exposed to a lot of information, resulting in an explosion of social media in the lives of many people. If this trend continues, the environment will change significantly to the point where social media allows people to be who and what they want to be while conveying various aspects of their identity. Social media serves as a 'stage' for them to perform. The study findings reveal that participants utilized social media as both a "front" and "back" stage, where they not only expressed themselves and realized they were being 'watched', but also provided a space for them to relax and enjoy themselves while being entertained.

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