

Participation and Perception of Generation Z of Menganti Villages in the Regional Election Campaign on Social Media

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Abstract

The democratic process of the Regional Elections is developing along with the development of digital technology. Social media has emerged as a key instrument for political campaigns especially when it comes to connecting with Generation Z. They have extensive access to social media and their opinions on online political campaigns reflect their level of participation. This study is to examine how Generation Z in Menganti Village participates in the Pilkada campaign on social media and how they perceive the effectiveness and credibility of the campaign. The methodology of this research is qualitative, and data is collected through campaigns on social media platforms including WhatsApp, Instagram, and TikTok as well as interviews. The results of the study show that adolescents' participation in the Pilkada campaign on social media varies, ranging from simply consuming information to being active in discussions and the dissemination of political content. Digital literacy factors, political preferences, and campaign strategies of candidates have a significant influence on their engagement. In addition, Generation Z's perception of political campaigns on social media tends to be diverse; Some consider it an educational source of information, but others feel that the campaign is full of hoaxes and propaganda. By understanding the patterns of participation and perception of Generation Z in the Pilkada campaign on social media, this research is expected to contribute to increasing digital political literacy as well as a more inclusive and transparent campaign strategy for the younger generation.

Keywords: *Participation, Social Media, Election Campaigns.*

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INTRODUCTION

The selection of regional heads (pilkada) is a significant mechanism that allows Indonesian people to adopt a democratic political system, to elect regional leaders directly every five years. The people's choices in the election were greatly affected by the reputation and figures of the prospective local head. Therefore, effective political communication is especially important during the campaign. As a key component of democracy, the campaign is described by Roger and storey (fatmawati, 2021) as a series of organized communication activities intended to affect public opinion from time to time. With the ultimate goal of winning elections, each candidate tried to persuade voters during the campaign by communicating their vision, mission, and work plan.

As technology advances, pilkada's campaign methods have grown beyond direct meetings and billboards, but they have also exploited social media. Social media platforms have proved effective in spreading political information and shaping public opinion especially among the younger generation. The highly active z generation in social media not only receives information but also participates in discussions and spreading political content. Elections are a pillar of democracy and the role of social media in political campaigns. Social media has become a major tool in establishing the image of the candidate (dwiyanti et al., 2023). Social media has significant impact on the involvement of the z generations. in today's digital age, online channels facilitate the spread of political information and rapid public involvement. Therefore, understanding the participation of the z generation in the election campaign in social media became necessary to understand the contribution of the younger generation in the democratic process.

With a sizable youth population and extensive access to social media, the village has seen an increase in the number of active political campaigns carried out online especially on websites such as instagram, ticktock, and whatsapp. However, the extent to which the z-generation in the village rejoined the election campaign on social media and their opinions on online political campaigns are not known. Previously centered around a physical event such as a parade, the election campaigns have now switched online with social media to serve as key platforms to share the campaign's content. Prospective candidates invest resources in digital ads intended for young people, including the replacement villages. Compared with previous generations, the z generation displayed a different pattern of political involvement, emphasized authenticity, focused on specific issues, and a preference for technological political participation.

Social media serves as a platform for constructive effort as well as for the dissemination of hate speech, false information, and political polarization. Village z generations are confronted with a variety of political content, both instructive and manipulative. Understanding their opinions about election campaigns on social media depends largely on how individuals sift, validate, and react to this political narrative. The social Internet gave the z generation in the countryside the opportunity to participate in more varied and broader political conversations. Early indications are that Internet platforms have facilitated new types of public participation, campaign monitoring programs, and urban debate forums. This incident demonstrates how the younger generation in rural areas can become more involved in their communities with the help of digital technology.

Secondly, (muhammad i.d., firza a. h, fun. S, usni u, djoni g, 2022) spoke of the time of the covid-19 global pandemic, the southern attache ran a simultaneous poll of regional heads (pilkada) in 2020. To enhance voting participation, politicians and political parties need to make an efficient campaign plan. As a result of the increased use of social media and the Internet as a result of the pandemic of mayoral candidate and deputy mayor has the opportunity to use digital platforms as campaign tools. Social media has grown to be an important tool of telling people about their work initiatives and influencing their political involvement. This article emphasizes how important social media is to promote political involvement because social media is so accessible and widely used. Additionally, social media is a viable substitute for campaigns during the limit of covid-19 pandemic activity. The primary purpose of this article is to review how use of social media is affecting voting political involvement in the 2020 south tackle.

Third, (wildhan k, Christian d.b, Bob, muhammad r.r, 2021) research is investigating the phenomenon of political campaigns and digital engagement created by using medsos platforms such as the fb and twitter, with a focus on the simultaneous elections of regional heads in 2020. Research focuses on depok by studying pradi-afifah and idris-priests medsos, the two candidates who are running in the 2020 city pilkada. The study USES qualitative methodology, focusing on current campaigns on social media and digital engagement strategies. Research data was obtained by observing medsos conversations during the election campaign. The narrative surrounding the campaign worries in medsos, particularly fb and twitter, is checked using a method of social networking analysis (sna). Studies show that each candidate has a distinct signature as to the use of social media for campaign purposes.

Fourth, (rahmi d and pia, 2023) the function and impact of social media in the 2024 election campaign was researched in this study. For this study, descriptive qualitative methodologies are used to collect data on medsos use during the presidential campaign. According to the results, social media has developed into a potent tool for presidential candidates and their campaigns to spread their political views to voters. In addition, medsos offers a forum for public involvement through debate, comments, and campaign sharing content. Nevertheless, the survey also noted some of the difficulties that arose when using social media during the presidential campaign. Social media makes it easier for false or complex information to develop that can distort voting vote and sabotage the democratic process. According to research, social media will be crucial to the presidential campaign of 2024. To achieve their campaign goals, politicians and campaign teams must know how to use social media effectively. To enhance their democratic involvement, voters must also develop their critical and strategic thinking skills while feasting on social media political content.

Finally, (nugraheni a, wenny e.s., Robert h. s, 2023) examined how social media helped more voting first in the 2019 election was the purpose of this research. Descriptive analytical is the research methodology used to describe, assess, and understand data. Data collection techniques include questionnaires, focus group discussions (FGD), interviews, and observations. According to the findings, 77.6% of voters first use instagram from other social media platforms to get information on elections. Twitter, youtube, and whatsapp are additional platforms used. Modernization, intellectual impact, contemporary mass media, and government involvement in social, economic, and cultural issues are among the factors

In the context of a new village pilkada, where local political dynamics coupled with strong digital information flows, the study seeks to unearth the complexity of participation and the perceptions of the z generations. This growing generation in the digital age has a unique characteristic in interacting with political information, which is different from the previous generation. Thus, a deep understanding of how they are involved in the election campaign through social media, and how they perceive the effectiveness and credibility of the campaign, becomes crucial. This study not only observed surface phenomena but also attempted to dig deeper into the political behavior of the z-generation in the digital world. Additionally, the study will also highlight the diversity of the z generation's perceptions of social media political campaigns.

Thus, it is hoped that it will contribute significantly to understanding the dynamic political participation of the younger generation in the digital age. It is hoped that the results will be the basis for a more effective, inclusive, and transparent political campaign strategy that reaches out and involves the optimum z generation. It is also hoped that it will increase awareness of the importance of digital political literacy among the younger generation, so that they can become intelligent and critical voters.

METHODS

The study USES descriptive qualitative methods in order to explore the participation and perceptions of the z-generation village change to kampaye pilkada on social media. The village replaces its border between countries and cities, making it a convenient location to observe a social-digital transition. Data buildup techniques involve two ways: first, through intensive interviews with key informers for primary data; Second, through a review of literature for secondary data. This two-way approach allows for a deeper understanding of the subject's research. The study USES the z generation (born between 1997-2012) as a research subject. A stringent strategy is used to select subjects, which involve selection of participants according to established standards consistent with research objectives. Among the requirements are: (1) be at least 17 years old or qualify as voters in the election, and (2) actively use at least one social media platform.

In Jürgen Habermas's idea of public space and communicative action. According to Habermas, public space is an inclusive arrangement where individuals can collectively voice their ideas on social, political, and economic matters (Pembayun, 2017). In the context of the villages, social media has created an alternative public space for a z-generation that might previously be limited to the village forum. WhatsApp, Instagram, and Ticktock platforms are now places of political discussion. The z generation reclaims social media to access this political information to allow them to shape more independent political opinions. Furthermore, the Habermas communicative act views communication as a means of achieving common understanding (mutual understanding) through rational argument. Election campaigns in the villages change, generation z often distinguishable between dialogue-oriented (communicative) campaigns and purely persuasive (strategic) campaigns. Candidates who use dialogue approaches on social media tend to be more positive than gen z. The ability to detect disinformation and manipulative content becomes an important social skill for rural z genes. Social media also facilitated the creation of a greater egalitarian consensus, so the legitimacy of candidates in the eye of gen z increasingly

depended on their authentic involvement in digital dialogue.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In-depth interviews indicate that the respondents used Instagram and Tok, the two most popular social media platforms in the Z generation, as sources for information on the election campaign. Both platforms provide interesting interactive and visual information to the appetites of the generation. It is of interest to note that the comment section is another source of secondary information that has had a significant impact on how political opinions formed. Participants firmly asserted that the campaign in social media had a significant impact on his political perceptions. Digital campaigns serve as a window on information that allows a Z generation to know the track record and performance of candidates, something that may not be exposed through conventional media. S declares: "Yes, changing my point of view, like before, maybe I don't follow the candidate so much as I don't understand his performance, but through this social media campaign I see how he did before, so we can determine the tracking of prospective candidates." The political patterns and discussions that occur among the Z-s generation explain that campaign information from social media is often the basis for discussions with peers: "sometimes I have friends who share posts with me, and then I start to respond and then you start discussions about candidate candidates and give us opinions

The role of social media toward political participation

Social media has turned communication into an interactive narrative by leveraging Internet technology for social engagement. Through social media, politicians can communicate with their supporters to form public opinion and rally vast and unequal political support. Politicians can interact with their supporters on social media to influence public opinion and mobilize widespread political support. Use of social media also increases public participation in elections, political connections and political communications networks. This is often the case during the local head election campaign (pilkada). The findings of interviews indicate that the use of social media during political campaigns increases the level of political involvement of Z generasi Z generation who often use more social media, tend to participate in elections, disseminate political information, and engage in political discourse. Social media provides platforms to voice political views and disagreements, support the candidate, and engage with like-minded individuals. As a result, social media offers a forum that expands public accessibility and political involvement.

Generasi Z booster factors for participation

A major contributing factor in society's political participation is citizen political awareness, which measures individual involvement in the political participation process and is associated with knowledge and awareness of the rights and obligations associated with community environment and political activities. Similar to the Z generation, technology has had a significant impact on this generation in many aspects of life, including politics. Generation Z, as a growing group in the digital age, has a unique stimulus that influences their participation.

The influence of peers, where the opinions and actions of their peers strongly influence their interest in certain issues. Discussion and involvement in social groups, strengthened by

social media, can trigger their participation. Furthermore, the values and views engendered in the family have significant effects. Families who actively engage in social or political activities tend to encourage the Z generation members to do the same. The people they admire, such as celebrities, influencers, or activists, can also influence their views and actions. Active public figures who voice social or political issues can inspire the Z generation to become involved and participate.

Easy access to the Internet and social media enabled the Z generation to get information quickly and easily, raising their awareness and interest to participate (Aminulloh et al., 2025). Generation Z feels comfortable using technology to communicate and participate (Aminulloh et al., 2025). They are often involved in online activism, social media campaigns, and digital petitions to voice their voices and encourage change.

The challenges faced

While social media had a positive effect on political campaigns, there were also obstacles, especially the spread of false information and false news. Unverified information can spread quickly and affect public opinion in open social media environments. Additionally, social media "bubble filters" and "echo chamber" can restrict people's access to a wide range of viewpoints, resulting in polarization and a comprehensive lack of knowledge about political matters. The findings also show that it is important for social media users, particularly the Z generation, to critically screen campaign information. Not everything shared in social media is factual, and disseminating information without verification can lead to bad results. Z generations need to improve their ability to search for true information and apply the "strain before sharing" principle to avoid disseminating false information.

CONCLUSION

Studies on the participation and perceptions of the village Z generation change in election campaigns on social media indicate that social media has become a significant campaign tool, particularly in reaching young voters. The Z generation in the village retains, as part of the digital generation, has broad access to social media, and the study seeks to analyze their participation and perceptions of the campaign's effectiveness and credibility. The participation of the Z generation in the election campaign on social media varies from just feeding information to actively discussing and disseminating political content. Digital literacy factors, political preference, and campaign strategies of candidates have significant impact on their involvement. In addition, the Z generation's perceptions of social media political campaigns tend to vary; Some view it as a source of educational information, but others feel that the campaign is fraught with hoaks and propaganda.

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