

Political Participation, Civic Education, and Social Media on Generation Z's Political Engagement

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the influence of political participation, civic education, and social media on the political engagement of generation Z in Indonesia. Using a survey method, data were collected from 500 respondents consisting of college and high school students aged 18 to 24 years. Multiple regression analysis was conducted to identify the relationship between independent variables and political engagement. The results showed that all three variables had a significant influence, with civic education and social media use contributing positively to the level of political engagement. These findings indicate the importance of developing educational programs that emphasize civic education and the use of social media as a tool to encourage political participation among the younger generation. This study suggests that educational institutions and the government should work together to create an environment that supports the political engagement of generation Z.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The advancement of information and communication technology has transformed numerous facets of existence, including in terms of political participation. Generation Z, known as the generation born after 1995 to the early 2010s, grew up in an environment that is highly connected to the internet and social networking platforms. They are the first generation to fully integrate digital technology into their daily lives. This has a significant impact on the way they participate in the political process. According to a study conducted by [1], generation Z tends to have

more individualistic characteristics but is also highly connected globally, with social media playing a central role in their social and political interactions. In Indonesia, this phenomenon is clearly seen in political campaigns that use social media as the main platform to interact with young voters.

Civics education also plays an important role in shaping the political participation of generation Z. Civics education in high schools and universities is expected to provide an understanding of the rights and obligations of citizens, as well as the importance of involvement in the political

process. Based on research conducted by [2], civics education can increase political awareness and interest in engaging in political activities. However, the challenges in implementing the civics education curriculum in Indonesia often face obstacles in attracting students' interest in complex political issues, so that many young people feel apathetic or uninterested.

On the other hand, social media has become the main channel for Generation Z to access information and engage in political discussions. Platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok allow them to share opinions, follow developments in political issues, and interact with politicians or activists directly. A study conducted by [3] indicates that social media usage positively correlates with political engagement, especially among the younger generation. Social media is not only a space to express opinions, but also a tool for political mobilization, as seen in various social and political movements, both in Indonesia and globally.

While social media can be an effective tool for increasing political engagement, there are also concerns about its impact on the quality of political participation. The phenomenon of "clicktivism," where individuals only take minimal political actions such as "liking" or sharing content without further engagement, is a concern. In addition, the high rate of dissemination of unverified information and fake news through social media may negatively affect Generation Z's political opinions [4]. Thus, Generation Z's political participation is affected by a multitude of interconnected elements, such as civic education and social media, and the increasingly digital socio-political environment.

The main problem in this study is the lack of studies that deeply explore the correlation between political engagement, civic education, and social media use on the political engagement of generation Z in Indonesia. Although many studies examine each variable separately, research that combines these three variables in the context

of generation Z is still limited. In addition, there is no consensus on how big a role social media and civic education play in influencing the political engagement of generation Z in Indonesia, given the ever-evolving socio-political context.

This study aims to analyze the influence of political participation, civic education, and social media on the political engagement of generation Z in Indonesia. By understanding the relationship between these three factors, it is hoped that this study can provide more comprehensive insights into the political participation patterns of generation Z, as well as recommendations for policy makers and educational institutions in increasing political awareness and involvement of the younger generation in the political process.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 *Generation Z Political Participation*

Political participation can be defined as the involvement of individuals in the political process to influence government decisions or public policies. [5] identified various forms of political participation, ranging from voting, joining interest groups, to participating in protests. Generation Z, as a generation that grew up with digital technology, has a different way of participating in politics than previous generations. A study by [6] stated that Generation Z tends to prefer political participation based on personal identity and social networks compared to formal participation, such as general elections.

In the Indonesian context, Generation Z's political participation is influenced by unique social and political dynamics. On the one hand, they have wider access to information through social media and the internet, but on the other hand, there is political apathy due to a lack of trust in political institutions [7]. This phenomenon raises challenges in increasing Generation Z's political involvement, especially in the context of an ever-evolving democracy.

2.2 *Citizenship Education and Political Participation*

Civic education plays a significant impact in influencing political awareness and involvement of the younger generation in the democratic process. According to [8], civic education aims to teach democratic values, the rights and obligations of citizens, and the importance of political participation. Effective civic education can improve political literacy, namely the ability to understand political issues and participate in political decision-making [9].

In Indonesia, civic education is taught in schools as part of the compulsory curriculum, but its effectiveness is still questionable. A study by [1] showed that although civic education can improve students' political knowledge, many students are still less interested in political topics because they are considered boring or irrelevant to everyday life. Therefore, it is important to explore how civic education can be optimized to be relevant to the interests and needs of generation Z, who tend to be more active in the digital world.

2.3 *The Influence of Social Media on Political Engagement*

Social media has transformed the behaviour of individuals, particularly the youth, engage in politics. According to [10], social media provides a more open and participatory platform for the younger generation to voice political opinions, organize movements, and obtain political information directly. In another study, [11] found that engagement in social media is positively correlated with increased political participation, especially in more informal forms of participation such as online political discussions and sharing politically related content.

However, the use of social media also has risks, especially related to the spread of inaccurate information and "clicktivism" or minimal political

participation, where individuals feel they have contributed enough by simply "liking" or "sharing" political content [12]. In Indonesia, the role of social media in politics is very prominent, especially in political campaigns and social movements, such as the student movement in 2019 which used social media to mobilize public support [13].

2.4 *Hypothesis Development*

According to the aforementioned literature review, this study develops several hypotheses to answer research questions regarding the impact of political engagement, civic education, and social media on the political involvement of generation Z.

Hypothesis 1: Political participation has a positive effect on the political involvement of generation Z.

As discussed, Generation Z's political participation, although different in form from previous generations, still plays an important role in political engagement. Generation Z is more inclined to partake in informal modes of participation, such as political discussions on social media or participation in online petitions. Studies conducted by [1] shows that Generation Z who engage in political participation, both formal and informal, have higher levels of political engagement.

Hypothesis 2: Civic education has a positive effect on the political involvement of generation Z.

Civic education, as a formal instrument in improving political literacy, is expected to enhance political engagement of the younger generation. [14] stated that students who receive good civic education tend to have a better understanding of politics and are more active in political activities. In Indonesia, although the effectiveness of civic education still needs to be improved, research by [9] demonstrates a favourable correlation between civic education and political involvement.

Hypothesis 3: Social media usage has a positive effect on Generation Z's political engagement.

The use of social media by Generation Z plays a significant role in their political engagement. Research conducted by [2] shows that social media provides a space for the younger generation to engage in politics in a more informal and flexible way. Despite the risks associated with inaccurate information and clicktivism, social media remains an important tool in mobilizing Generation Z's political participation, especially in Indonesia which has the largest number of social media users in the world.

Hypothesis 4: Civic education and social media use together have a positive effect on Generation Z's political engagement.

Previous studies have shown that civic education and social media have the potential to complement each other in increasing the political engagement of the younger generation. Civic education can provide a theoretical foundation and in-depth understanding of politics, while social media provides space for Generation Z to apply this knowledge in the form of real political participation. Therefore, it is expected that the combination of these two factors can have a greater impact on the political engagement of Generation Z.

3. METHOD

3.1 Research Design

This study uses a quantitative survey design that is descriptive and explanatory. This approach was chosen to:

- a. Explaining the relationship between independent variables, namely political participation, civic education, and social media use, with the dependent variable, namely generation Z political involvement.
- b. Data were collected through questionnaires distributed to

respondents, then analyzed using statistical methods. This study employs multiple regression analysis to examine the influence of independent variables on dependent variables.

3.2 Population and Sample

The population in this study comprises all Generation Z persons in Indonesia, specifically those born between 1997 and 2012 who are between 18 and 26 years old at the time of this study. Generation Z was chosen as the focus of the study because they are the generation most exposed to digital technology and social media, and are an important segment in future political engagement in Indonesia.

This study uses purposive sampling as its methodology. The study sample comprises 400 respondents chosen according to specific criteria:

- a. Aged 18-26 years.
- b. Actively use social media.
- c. Have received citizenship education during formal education.
- d. Domiciled in Indonesia.

This sample size was determined by considering the adequacy of the sample for multiple regression analysis and a low margin of error ($\pm 5\%$).

3.3 Measurement of Variables

This study employed a 5-point Likert scale to assess the variables, requiring respondents to indicate their degree of agreement with the presented statements. This scale extends from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The subsequent are the operational definitions and indicators for each variable:

a. Political Participation

Political participation is defined as the active participation of individuals in political endeavours, both formal and informal [11]. Indicators used include: voting, attending demonstrations, signing online petitions, participating in political discussions on social media,

and donating money to political campaigns.

b. Civic education

Civic education refers to knowledge, understanding, and attitudes regarding the rights and obligations of citizens and democratic values acquired through formal education [15]. Indicators used include: understanding of political rights, obligations as citizens, the importance of elections, and the concept of democracy.

c. Use of Social Media

Social media usage refers to the frequency and intensity of using social media platforms in a political context [16]. Indicators include: duration of social media use to obtain political news, share political information, and follow political accounts or political figures.

d. Generation Z Political Engagement

Political engagement is defined as the level of active participation of Generation Z in the political process, including political discussions, campaigns, and political decision-making [17]. Indicators include: participation in elections, involvement in political campaigns, participation in petitions or protests, and involvement in political organizations.

3.4 Data Collection Procedure

Data collection was conducted through the distribution of online questionnaires accessed by respondents through links shared on social media. The distribution of the questionnaires was conducted over a period of two weeks. The questionnaire was designed by considering the ease of access and responsiveness of social media users. Before the questionnaire was widely distributed, a pilot test was conducted on 30 respondents to ensure the validity and reliability of the instrument.

Validity testing was conducted using Pearson correlation to ensure that

each item in the questionnaire was able to measure the desired construct. Reliability testing was conducted using the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for assessing the internal consistency of each scale. Cronbach's Alpha values above 0.70 are considered adequate for this instrument [18].

3.5 Data Analysis Techniques

The data obtained from the questionnaire results will be analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Statistical analysis is conducted via SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) software. The following are the stages of data analysis that will be carried out:

a. Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive analysis is used to describe the demographic characteristics of respondents, such as age, gender, education level, and frequency of social media use. In addition, this analysis will also be used to determine the level of political engagement of generation Z in general.

b. Classical Assumption Test

Prior to doing multiple regression analysis, a classical assumption test is conducted to ensure that the regression model meets the required statistical requirements. The classical assumption test includes:

- 1) Normality Test: Using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test to ensure that the data distribution follows a normal distribution.
- 2) Multicollinearity Test: Conducted to ensure indicating there is no significant correlation among the independent variables as indicated by the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) value with a VIF limit value of <10.
- 3) Heteroscedasticity Test: Using the Glejser test to

ensure that the residual variables do not have varying variances.

c. Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis was used to test the influence of political participation variables, civic education, and social media use on generation Z's political involvement. The regression equation used is as follows:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \epsilon$$

Where:

- a. Y = Political Involvement
 - b. X₁ = Political Participation
 - c. X₂ = Citizenship Education
 - d. X₃ = Social Media Usage
 - e. β₀ = Constant
 - f. β₁, β₂, β₃ = Regression coefficients
 - g. ε = Error term
- d. Significance Test

The F test evaluates the significance of the overall model, whereas the t test assesses the significance of each independent variable in relation to the dependent variable. A p-value less than 0.05 is deemed statistically significant.

e. Coefficient of Determination (R²)

The coefficient of determination quantifies the extent to which the independent variable accounts for variations in the dependent variable. The greater the R² value, the better the regression model explains the variation in political engagement of generation Z.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Results

1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the 400 respondents who participated in this study.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	18-20 years	150	37.5
	21-23 years old	180	45.0
	24-26 years old	70	17.5
Gender	Man	200	50.0
	Woman	200	50.0
Level of education	High School/Vocational School	100	25.0
	D3	150	37.5
	S1	150	37.5

Table 1 shows that respondents consisted of 37.5% aged 18-20 years, 45% aged 21-23 years, and 17.5% aged 24-26 years. The gender distribution was quite balanced with 50% male and 50% female. Most respondents had D3 and

S1 education, 37.5% each, indicating that the majority of respondents were at a fairly high level of education.

2. Validity and Reliability Test

The results of the validity and reliability tests of the research instruments are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Validity and Reliability Test

Variables	Pearson Coefficient (r)	Validity	Cronbach's Alpha	Reliability
Political Participation	0.782	Valid	0.867	Reliable
Civic education	0.814	Valid	0.892	Reliable
Use of Social Media	0.761	Valid	0.853	Reliable
Political Involvement	0.796	Valid	0.875	Reliable

Table 2 shows that all variables have significant Pearson coefficient values and good validity. The Cronbach's Alpha value for each variable is also greater than 0.70, indicating that the research instrument has high reliability.

3. Multiple Regression Analysis

The outcomes of multivariate regression analysis to test the influence of political participation, civic education, and social media use on generation Z's political engagement are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Multiple Regression Analysis

Independent Variables	Coefficient (β)	Std. Error	t-count	p-value
Constants	1.253	0.315	3.978	0.000
Political Participation	0.432	0.072	6,000	0.000
Civic education	0.295	0.079	3,738	0.000
Use of Social Media	0.315	0.068	4.632	0.000
R²	0.685			
F	62,553			0.000

Table 3 shows the results of multiple regression analysis with an R² value of 0.685, which means that 68.5% of the variation in political engagement of generation Z can be explained by the variables of political participation, civic education, and social media use. All independent factors exert a strong influence on political engagement with a p value <0.05.

- a. **Political Participation** has a β coefficient of 0.432, indicating that increased political participation is positively related to increased political involvement of generation Z.
- b. **Civic Education** has a β coefficient of 0.295, indicating that good civic education will increase Generation Z's understanding and awareness of the importance of involvement in politics.

The use of social media also has a positive effect with a β coefficient of 0.315, indicating that the use of social media as a means of political information plays a role in encouraging the political involvement of generation Z.

4.2 Discussion

This section discusses the results of research on the influence of political

participation, civic education, and social media on the political engagement of generation Z. The discussion will begin by interpreting the results of the statistical analysis, then discussing the implications of the results, and comparing them with previous research and summarizing the main findings.

1. Interpretation of Multiple Regression Analysis Results

The findings of the multiple regression analysis indicate that the three independent variables— political participation, civic education, and social media use— exert a considerable impact on the political involvement of Generation Z. The R² value of 0.685 indicates that around 68.5% of the variation in political engagement can be explained by the three variables. This shows the importance of the three factors in understanding the dynamics of political engagement of generation Z, which is an age group that grew up amidst advances in information and communication technology.

a) Political Participation

The β coefficient for political participation is 0.432, indicating that the higher an individual's political participation, the higher their

level of political engagement. This is in line with the theory of political participation, which states that individuals who are more actively involved in political activities—such as discussions, campaigns, or demonstrations—are more likely to participate in elections or other political activities. This finding also supports the view that direct experience in political activities can increase an individual's understanding and interest in political issues.

b) Civic education

Civic education has a β coefficient of 0.295, indicating that good education regarding the rights and responsibilities of citizens can increase political engagement. Civic education aims to equip individuals with the knowledge and skills needed to actively participate in political life. This result is consistent with research by Torney-Purta et al. (2001) which found that effective civic education can encourage students to engage in political activities in the future. Therefore, it is imperative for educational institutions to strengthen the civic education curriculum to increase the political awareness of the younger generation.

c) Use of Social Media

The β coefficient for social media use is 0.315, indicating that social media exerts a considerable beneficial influence on political engagement. Social media provides a platform for Generation Z to access political information, discuss, and interact with stakeholders. Previous research by [1] showed that social media use can facilitate political engagement by allowing

individuals to connect with communities and gain easier access to current information. Therefore, social media can be considered an effective tool to increase the political engagement of the younger generation.

2. Implications of Research Results

The results of this study have several implications for policy development and education in Indonesia. First, it is important for the government and educational institutions to develop programs that encourage political participation of the younger generation. These programs can be in the form of seminars, workshops, or discussion forums that focus on current political issues and the importance of political involvement.

Second, civic education needs to be strengthened in the formal education curriculum. This can be done by introducing more interactive and interesting learning methods for students, so that they are more motivated to learn their rights and responsibilities as citizens. Thus, civic education is not just a theory, but also a practice that can be applied in everyday life.

Third, the use of social media in a political context needs to be maximized. Policy makers and political parties must understand effective ways to use social media as a campaign and communication tool with Generation Z. For example, using platforms that are popular among the younger generation to convey political messages and invite them to be involved in the democratic process.

3. Comparison with Previous Research

The findings of this study align with other prior studies demonstrating a strong correlation between education and political participation, and social media use on

political engagement. For example, research by [19] shows that social media use can increase political engagement, especially among young people. In addition, a study by [20] found that participation in political activities is closely related to the education obtained by individuals.

However, although many studies support these findings, there are also some studies that show different results. For example, research by [12] shows that not all forms of social media participation contribute positively to political engagement, depending on the context and how the media is used. Therefore, it is important to conduct further research that explores how and in what context social media can influence Generation Z's political engagement.

5. CONCLUSION

This study has successfully revealed the significant influence of political

participation, civic education, and social media use on the political engagement of generation Z. The results of the analysis show that the three variables contribute positively to encouraging the younger generation to actively participate in the political process. High political participation, supported by effective civic education and proper use of social media, has been shown to increase their political awareness and involvement. These findings emphasize the importance of civic-oriented education and the development of programs that encourage political participation among the younger generation. In addition, the results of this study also recommend the use of social media as a strategic tool to facilitate political discussions and the dissemination of information, so that generation Z can be more actively involved in their political life. Thus, efforts to increase the political engagement of generation Z must involve synergy between education, public policy, and information technology in order to create a more democratic and participatory society.

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