GENERATION Z, SOCIAL MEDIA, AND DIGITAL DEMOCRACY: A LITERATURE REVIEW OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

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ABSTRACT

The development of digital technology has brought significant changes in the dynamics of political participation in society, especially among Generation Z, known as the digital native generation. Social media not only functions as a means of communication, but has also developed into a digital public space that allows the younger generation to obtain political information and engage in various political activities online. This study examines the relationship between Generation Z, social media, and political participation in the context of digital democracy through a literature review approach. Research data were obtained from various scientific articles published in national and international journals between 2019 and 2025. Data analysis was conducted using content analysis techniques to identify patterns of research findings related to social media use and political participation of the younger generation. The results of the study indicate that social media plays an important role as a source of political information as well as a space for digital political participation for Generation Z. Through social media, the younger generation can access political information widely, express political opinions, and engage in various public discourses in the digital space.

Keywords : *Generation Z, Social Media, Digital Democracy, Political Participation, Literature Review*

INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology in the last two decades has brought about major transformations in the social, economic, and political life of global society. The internet and social media are no longer merely a means of communication, but have evolved into a new public space that allows people to actively participate in various social and political processes. In the context of modern democracy, the presence of digital technology opens up opportunities for people to engage in political discourse more broadly, quickly, and interactively. This phenomenon is often referred to as digital democracy, namely the practice of democracy that utilizes information technology to expand public access to political information and increase public participation in the political decision-making process. One of the groups of people most affected by this digital transformation is Generation Z. This generation is generally defined as individuals born between 1997 and 2012 and is known as the generation that grew up alongside the development of digital technology and the internet. As a digital native generation, Generation Z has different characteristics than previous generations in accessing information, communicating, and expressing political views. Social media such as Instagram, TikTok, X (Twitter), and YouTube have become the main platforms for this generation to obtain information, build social networks, and engage in public discussions on various social and political issues. Therefore, the presence of social media not only shapes the communication patterns of the younger generation, but also influences the dynamics of political participation in the era of digital democracy.

In the context of democracy, political participation is a crucial indicator of the level of public involvement in a country's political process. Political participation can take various forms, from voting in elections, participating in political discussions, expressing aspirations through the media, to engaging in social movements. In today's digital era, political participation is no longer limited to conventional activities in physical public spaces, but has also expanded into the digital space through social media. Through digital platforms, people, especially the younger generation, can express their opinions, disseminate political information, criticize government policies, and mobilize support for specific issues more widely and quickly. The development of internet and social media usage in Indonesia has shown a very significant trend in recent years. Digital surveys indicate that the majority of Indonesians are connected to the internet and actively use social media in their daily lives. Data shows that around 90.4% of internet users in Indonesia aged 18–24 are active on social media, making the young age group one of the largest social media users in Indonesia (Wahyono, 2026). The high intensity of social media use shows that digital space has a very important role in shaping public opinion and the dynamics of political communication among the younger generation.

Furthermore, in the context of electoral politics, Generation Z also holds an increasingly strategic position in determining the direction of democracy in Indonesia. Data from the General Elections Commission (KPU) shows that approximately 22.85% of the total Permanent Voter List (DPT) in the 2024 Election comes from Generation Z, making this group one of the largest voter bases in the democratic process in Indonesia (Achmad & Dwimawanti, 2024). With such significant numbers, Generation Z has great potential to influence national political dynamics, both through voting behavior and through various other forms of political participation.

In practice, social media has become one of the primary means for Generation Z to obtain political information and shape their political preferences. Research shows that most young people use social media as their primary source of political information because it is considered more accessible, faster, and interactive than conventional media. In a study on Generation Z media preferences, approximately 39% of respondents stated that social media was their primary source of political information, while 46% still relied on traditional mass media as a reference in understanding political issues (Kusumawardani et al., 2025). These findings indicate that social media plays an increasingly important role in shaping the political perceptions of young people in the digital era. In addition to being a source of information, social media also functions as a space for political participation, allowing young people to engage directly in political discourse. Various studies have shown that social media use has a significant correlation with the level of political participation of Generation Z. High intensity of social media use tends to encourage young people to be more active in various political activities, such as expressing political opinions, participating in digital campaigns, and engaging in online political discussions (Stiawan, 2025). This phenomenon shows that social media not only functions as a means of communication, but also as an effective medium for political mobilization for the younger generation.

However, the rise in political participation through social media also presents various challenges to the practice of digital democracy. One major challenge is the emergence of disinformation and the spread of unverified information in the digital space. In a study on Generation Z's behavior in accessing political information, approximately 78.15% of respondents expressed concern about the validity of information circulating on social media (Kusumawardani et al., 2025). This indicates that although social media provides broad access to political information, the quality of information circulating in the digital space remains a significant issue that can impact the quality of people's political participation. Furthermore, social media algorithms, which tend to display information that aligns with user preferences, also have the potential to create an echo chamber phenomenon, a condition where individuals are only exposed to information that aligns with their own views. This condition can strengthen political polarization and reduce the quality of democratic dialogue in the digital public sphere. In the long term, this phenomenon can impact the quality of democracy because political discourse is no longer based on an open and rational exchange of ideas, but is instead influenced by algorithmic preferences and the dynamics of content virality.

On the other hand, various studies also show that the younger generation plays a crucial role in driving social and political change through various social movements, both conventional and digital. Young people are often at the forefront of various social movements demanding policy changes and championing democratic values (Wahyuningroem, 2024). In this context, social media can serve as a means of social mobilization, enabling young people to build solidarity, disseminate information, and organize social movements more effectively. Although various studies have explored the relationship between social media and the political participation of young people, studies specifically examining the relationship between Generation Z, social media, and digital democracy through a literature review approach are still relatively limited. Most previous research tends to use surveys or case studies that focus on specific contexts, such as general elections or young voter behavior. Therefore, a more

comprehensive literature review is needed to understand how social media influences Generation Z's political participation in the broader context of digital democracy.

Based on this background, this study aims to conduct a literature review of various studies that discuss the relationship between Generation Z, social media, and political participation in the context of digital democracy. Through a literature review approach, this study is expected to identify research trends, key findings, and challenges faced in the practice of political participation among young people in the digital era. Furthermore, this research is also expected to provide academic contributions by enriching studies on digital democracy and the role of young people in the development of democracy in the information technology era.

METHOD

This study uses a literature review approach with a qualitative descriptive method to critically analyze various previous studies that discuss the relationship between Generation Z, social media, and political participation in the context of digital democracy. This approach was chosen because the literature review allows researchers not only to identify previous research findings but also to interpret, evaluate, and conceptually synthesize the development of academic discourse related to the dynamics of political participation of the younger generation in the digital era. Thus, the literature review method provides an opportunity for researchers to understand the pattern of research development, theoretical tendencies, and scientific contributions that have been made by various previous studies on the role of social media in shaping the political behavior of Generation Z.

The data sources in this study come from various scientific publications in the form of national and international journal articles relevant to the focus of the research study. The literature search was conducted through several academic databases that have scientific credibility, including Google Scholar, Garuda (Garba Rujukan Digital), Science and Technology Index (SINTA), and the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ). The use of these various databases aims to ensure that the literature used has adequate academic quality and is relevant to the development of studies on the political participation of the younger generation in the digital democracy ecosystem. The literature search process was carried out systematically using a number of keywords related to the research topic, such as *Generation Z* , *social media* , *political participation* , *digital democracy* , and *youth political participation* . The use of a combination of these keywords aims to broaden the scope of the literature search so that it can obtain various studies that have a conceptual relationship with the focus of the study being studied.

In the literature collection process, this study applied strict source selection principles to ensure the relevance and quality of the analyzed literature. The selected articles were scientific articles that substantially discussed the relationship between social media use, Generation Z characteristics, and the dynamics of political participation in the digital space. Furthermore, the articles analyzed were scientific publications published between 2019 and 2025, ensuring that the literature used represented relatively recent research developments on the phenomenon of political participation among young people in the digital era. The selected articles were also required to be available in full text form, allowing researchers to conduct an in-depth analysis of the research objectives, methodological approach, theoretical framework, and empirical findings.

Articles that were not directly relevant to the research focus, not published in scientific journals, or not available in full text were excluded from the analysis.

Following the literature search and selection process, articles meeting the criteria were systematically analyzed to identify key dimensions relevant to the research topic. The analysis involved comprehensively reading and evaluating each article to understand the research objectives, methods used, theoretical approaches underlying the research, and key findings. This process enabled researchers to gain a deeper understanding of how previous studies explain the relationship between social media use and Generation Z's political participation in the context of digital democratic transformation.

The data analysis in this study was conducted using a content analysis approach on various selected literature. Content analysis was used to identify conceptual patterns, main themes, and argumentative tendencies that emerged in various studies related to social media and the political participation of the younger generation. Through this analysis process, the researcher grouped the findings of previous studies into several main themes that represent the dynamics of Generation Z's political participation in the digital space, such as social media as a source of political information, social media as a space for digital political discourse, and social media as a means of mobilizing the political participation of the younger generation. Furthermore, the analysis was also directed at identifying various challenges that arise in the practice of digital democracy, such as the spread of disinformation, political polarization, and digital literacy issues that can affect the quality of political participation in the digital public space.

Next, the analysis results from various literatures are synthesized to produce a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between Generation Z, social media, and political participation in the context of digital democracy. The synthesis process is carried out by comparing and integrating various previous research findings to identify similarities, differences, and trends in research patterns developing in the academic literature. Through this synthesis process, the study not only presents previous research findings descriptively but also seeks to build a deeper conceptual understanding of how social media plays a role in shaping the political participation patterns of the younger generation in the era of digital transformation. By using a systematic and analytical literature review approach, this study is expected to provide an academic contribution in enriching the study of the relationship between Generation Z, social media, and digital democracy. Furthermore, this study is also expected to be able to identify various research gaps that still exist in previous studies, thereby providing a conceptual basis for the development of further research on the dynamics of political participation of the younger generation in the ever-evolving digital democracy ecosystem.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The results of this study were obtained through an analysis of various scientific articles discussing the relationship between Generation Z, social media, and political participation in the context of digital democracy. The analysis was conducted by identifying the research focus, methods used, and key findings from each study relevant to the study topic. Based on the literature analysis process, it was found that studies on Generation Z's political participation in the digital era generally highlight two main dimensions: social media as a source of political

information and social media as a space for digital political participation. These two dimensions indicate that social media not only influences the younger generation's political information consumption patterns but also shapes their patterns of engagement in political activities in the digital space.

A. Social Media as a Source of Political Information for Generation Z

The results of the literature analysis indicate that social media plays a very significant role in shaping the political information consumption patterns of Generation Z. Most of the studies analyzed indicate that the younger generation tends to utilize social media as a primary source for obtaining information on political issues, public policies, and national and global political dynamics. Ease of access to information, the speed of content dissemination, and the interactive characteristics of social media are the main factors that encourage the younger generation to rely on digital platforms for obtaining political information. Research findings also indicate that social media enables the younger generation to access various political perspectives from a variety of sources. Through social media, users can obtain information from the mass media, political figures, civil society organizations, and even digital communities concerned with specific social and political issues. This condition indicates that social media has created a more open and participatory structure for the distribution of political information compared to conventional media. However, several studies also indicate that the dominance of social media as a source of political information can pose various challenges, particularly related to the quality and validity of information circulating in the digital space. The spread of disinformation, hoaxes, and manipulative political content is one of the issues that can affect the quality of the younger generation's political understanding.

The following is a summary of several studies that discuss social media as a source of political information for Generation Z.

Table 1. Social Media as a Source of Political Information for Generation Z

No	Author & Year	Research Focus	Method	Research Findings
1	Saud (2020)	Social media and youth political participation	Quantitative	Social media has become the main source of political information for the younger generation.
2	Hidayat (2021)	Digital participation of the younger generation	Survey	The younger generation more often obtains political information through social media than conventional media.
3	Pratiwi (2022)	Digital democracy and social media	Qualitative	Social media expands access to political information for the public, especially the younger generation.
4	Kusumawardani et al. (2025)	Generation Z's political preferences	Survey	Exposure to political information through social media influences the

				political preferences of the younger generation.
5	Nugroho & Prasetyo (2023)	Consumption of political information by the younger generation	Quantitative	Generation Z accesses more political information through digital platforms than traditional media.

Based on these various studies, it can be concluded that social media plays an important role in shaping Generation Z's political information consumption patterns. However, the quality of information circulating in the digital space is an important factor that can influence the quality of the younger generation's political understanding.

Social Media as a Space for Digital Political Participation

In addition to serving as a source of political information, the results of the literature analysis also show that social media plays a role as a digital political participation space for Generation Z. Various studies have shown that social media provides opportunities for the younger generation to actively engage in political discourse through various digital political activities. Research findings indicate that Generation Z's political participation on social media can be realized through various activities, such as expressing political opinions, sharing political content, participating in online political discussions, and supporting certain campaigns or social movements. Through these activities, the younger generation not only plays a role as a consumer of political information, but also as a producer of information that can influence public opinion in the digital space.

Furthermore, several studies have shown that social media plays a significant role in the political mobilization of young people. Political campaigns, social movements, and various forms of public advocacy often develop through digital communication activities on social media. This suggests that social media can serve as a means of political mobilization that can increase public political awareness, particularly among young people. However, several studies have also identified the phenomenon of slacktivism, a form of political participation that is symbolic or limited to online activities without actual involvement in real-world political activities. This situation suggests that while social media can increase political engagement among young people, the quality of this political participation still requires further study.

The following is a summary of research that discusses social media as a digital political participation space for Generation Z.

Table 2. Social Media and Political Participation of Generation Z

No	Author & Year	Research Focus	Method	Research Findings
1	Stiawan (2025)	Social media use and political participation	Correlational	The intensity of social media use is correlated with the level of political participation of the younger generation.
2	Achmad & Dwimawanti (2024)	Social media and young voters	Quantitative	Social media influences Generation

				Z's political engagement in the electoral process.
3	Wahyuningroem (2024)	Digital social movements	Qualitative	Social media plays a role in mobilizing social movements among the younger generation.
4	Putricia et al. (2024)	Social media and Gen Z political participation	Literature review	Social media has become a space for political discourse for the younger generation.
5	Sari & Ramadhan (2023)	Digital activism of the younger generation	Qualitative	Social media allows the younger generation to voice their political aspirations more widely.

Based on the analysis of these various studies, it can be concluded that social media plays a significant role in expanding Generation Z's political participation within the context of digital democracy. Social media serves not only as a medium for political communication but also as a digital public space that enables young people to actively engage in political discourse and various other forms of political activity.

Discussion

The research findings show that social media plays a significant role in shaping Generation Z's political information consumption patterns and political participation in the context of digital democracy. This phenomenon demonstrates a transformation in political communication practices, from conventional to more digital, interactive, and participatory. In this context, social media functions not only as a communication medium but also as a digital public space that enables the public, especially the younger generation, to obtain political information, express opinions, and engage in various forms of political activity online. The findings of this study can be explained through the perspective of digital democracy theory, which states that developments in information and communication technology have opened up opportunities for the public to engage more broadly in the political process through various digital platforms. Digital democracy emphasizes that digital technology can expand access to political information and increase public participation in the democratic process (Coleman & Shane, 2019). In the context of Generation Z, social media has become a medium that allows the younger generation to access political information quickly and diversely, while also providing a space for them to express their political views more openly.

The results of this study are also in line with the perspective of political participation theory, which explains that political participation is the involvement of individuals in various activities aimed at influencing the political decision-making process (Verba, Schlozman, &

Brady, 2019). In the digital era, forms of political participation have experienced significant developments, where political activities are no longer limited to conventional participation such as participating in elections or political organization activities, but also include digital political activities such as discussing political issues on social media, sharing political content, and participating in digital campaigns.

The findings of this study indicate that social media plays a significant role as a source of political information for Generation Z. Younger generations tend to utilize social media to obtain information on political issues, public policies, and national and global political dynamics. This indicates that social media has become a dominant source of political information for young people in the digital era. This finding aligns with research conducted by Saud (2020), which shows that social media use has a significant relationship with increased political participation among young people in Indonesia. The study found that social media functions not only as a source of political information but also as a means of political communication that allows young people to interact directly with various political actors.

Furthermore, research conducted by Kusumawardani et al. (2025) also shows that Generation Z's political preferences are heavily influenced by information obtained through social media. Exposure to political information obtained through digital platforms can influence how the younger generation understands political issues and forms their political attitudes towards various political actors. This condition indicates that social media plays a significant role in the process of forming political opinions of the younger generation in the era of digital democracy. On the other hand, the results of this study also show that social media functions not only as a source of political information, but also as a space for digital political participation for Generation Z. The younger generation uses social media to express political views, participate in online political discussions, and support various social movements developing in the digital space. This phenomenon shows that social media has created a new public space that allows the younger generation to actively engage in political discourse.

These findings align with research conducted by Achmad and Dwimawanti (2024), which demonstrated that social media use influences the level of political participation of young voters in the context of general elections. The study showed that young people who actively use social media tend to have higher levels of political engagement compared to those who use it less frequently. This suggests that social media can serve as a medium to encourage young people's political involvement in the democratic process. Furthermore, research conducted by Wahyuningroem (2024) also demonstrates that social media plays a crucial role in mobilizing social movements among young people in the digital era. Various social movements that have developed in recent years often began with digital communication activities on social media, which then developed into broader social movements. This demonstrates that social media can serve as a means of political mobilization, enabling young people to build solidarity networks and disseminate political ideas more widely.

However, the results of this study also indicate that the increasing political participation of young people on social media is not always accompanied by adequate quality of political participation. Several studies have shown that young people's political activity on social media is often symbolic or limited to online activities without actual involvement in real-world political

activities. This phenomenon is known as slacktivism, a form of political participation that is minimal and does not result in significant political change.

The phenomenon of slacktivism can be explained through the perspective of digital participation theory, which states that the development of digital technology can create new forms of political participation that are more flexible and informal, but do not always result in substantial political engagement (Theocharis, 2019). In this context, activities such as liking, sharing political content, or writing political comments on social media can be considered forms of digital political participation, although their impact on political change remains a matter of debate in academic studies. Furthermore, several studies have highlighted challenges in the practice of digital democracy related to the spread of disinformation and political polarization on social media. Research shows that social media algorithms tend to display content that aligns with user preferences, potentially creating an echo chamber phenomenon, a condition where individuals are only exposed to information that aligns with their own views. This condition can strengthen political polarization and reduce the quality of political discourse in the digital public sphere.

Nevertheless, the overall results of this study indicate that social media has significant potential to increase Generation Z's political participation in the context of digital democracy. Social media provides opportunities for young people to access broader political information, express their political views openly, and engage in various digital political activities. Therefore, strengthening digital literacy and political education are important factors in ensuring that young people's political participation on social media can positively contribute to the quality of democracy. Thus, the findings of this study indicate that the relationship between Generation Z, social media, and political participation is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon. Social media can serve as an effective means to increase young people's political participation, but at the same time, it also presents various challenges related to the quality of information, the dynamics of political communication, and the evolving patterns of political participation in the digital era

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that the development of digital technology, particularly social media, has brought significant changes in the political participation patterns of Generation Z in the context of digital democracy. Social media no longer functions solely as a means of interpersonal communication, but has also evolved into a digital public space that allows the younger generation to access political information, build public opinion, and engage in various forms of political activities in a more open and participatory manner. The study results indicate that social media plays a significant role as a source of political information for Generation Z. The ease of access, speed of information distribution, and interactive nature of social media make digital platforms the primary medium for the younger generation in obtaining information related to political and social issues. Through social media, Generation Z can access various political perspectives from various sources, ranging from mass media, political actors, to digital communities. This condition shows that social media has created

a more dynamic and open pattern of political information consumption compared to conventional media.

In addition to being a source of political information, social media also serves as a space for digital political participation for Generation Z. Various studies have shown that young people use social media to express political views, participate in public discourse, and support various social movements developing in the digital space. This suggests that social media has expanded the space for political participation of the younger generation by providing a platform that enables more inclusive and participatory political engagement. However, the results of the literature review also indicate that Generation Z's political participation on social media is not free from various challenges in the practice of digital democracy. Several studies have highlighted problems such as the spread of disinformation, political polarization, and the phenomenon of *slacktivism* , a form of political participation that is symbolic and limited to online activities without being followed by actual involvement in political activities in the real world. This condition indicates that although social media can increase the political engagement of the younger generation, the quality of the resulting political participation still requires further attention. Overall, the findings of this study indicate that the relationship between Generation Z, social media, and political participation is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon. Social media has great potential to expand the space for political participation of the younger generation and strengthen the practice of digital democracy. However, to ensure that digital political participation can positively contribute to the quality of democracy, efforts are needed to improve digital literacy and strengthen political education for the younger generation. Thus, social media can become not only a means of political expression but also a medium that encourages more critical, rational, and constructive political participation in democratic life.

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