# Characteristics Of Generation Z On Social Media Ahead of the 2024 Election in Indonesia

Wahyu Kuncoro[1], Darsono Wisadirana[2] and Ali Mashuri[3]

**Abstract**

*The 2024 election has become a routine agenda every five years with all the hustle and bustle. As young voters, Generation Z have their votes considered and become a point of contention for election participants. Social media, inseparable from Generation Z, has become a vehicle for massive dissemination of information and political reporting. Therefore, this article aims to study Generation Z's characteristics on social media significantly ahead of the 2024 election. This article will also explain factors that influence the characteristics of Generation Z and the importance of political education on social media. The results of this research show the role of social media in influencing the characteristics and choices of Generation Z towards election candidates. The increasing massiveness of social media is accompanied by Indonesia's political demographics, where voters in the next election will be dominated by the younger generation identified as social media users. So, political propaganda often occurs with the emergence of hoaxes and so on. Political education on social media is crucial to forming a critical and sceptical character in approaching the 2024 elections.*

**Keywords:** *Characteristics, Generation Z, General Elections, Social Media.*

## INTRODUCTION

Elections are essential in a country that adheres to a democratic system. Elections represent the people's will in increasing the political system's legitimacy. However, reality shows that voter participation in current elections is experiencing a widespread downward trend in various countries1. In contrast to Indonesia, in the 2019 election, Indonesia showed the opposite trend, referring to the results of the General Election Commission's data release showing an increase in the number of participants in the 2019 election compared to the previous election. In the 2019 election, voter participation was 81%, while in the 2014 election, voter participation was onlyaround 75%2. The increase in participant numbers cannot be separated from the influence of social media, which is increasingly used by millennials and Generation Z. In this context, social media has a vital role in forming the character of Generation Z through exposure to content posted by content creators3.

Something beneficial for candidate pairs could happen if they could use social media to attract youth votes by carrying out engaging campaigns without having to brag about it on the political stage. However, on the contrary, amid a political climate that has entered cyberspace with all its chaos, it could become a boomerang for the elected candidates through the actions of their respective fanatical fans by making hoax tweets on social media. Buzzers' attempts to overthrow opponents' positions with short videos are prone to misunderstandings. This can influence the character of Generation Z in determining their choices. News on social media will significantly affect their perception of the candidates. Therefore, political education for first-time voters is essential to protect voters from media propaganda and to show a participatory attitude towards elections.

The study of elections is a study that is often carried out, especially by political science and government scholars. Issues regarding politics have always been fascinating to discuss, as evidenced by the many studies on this matter. The survey, conducted by Primanda Sukma Nur Wardhani, discusses explicitly the participation of first-time voters and their forms of political participation, as well as supporting and inhibiting factors to the political involvement of first-time voters in elections. Meanwhile, a Western scholar, Claes H. de Vries, compares young voter participation in the United States and Europe. According to him, the reluctance of young people as first-

[1] Doctoral program in Sociology, University of Brawijaya, Indonesia. Email: Wahyukncrs3s0s@student.ub.ac.id

[2] Sociology, University of Brawijaya, Indonesia. Email: Darsono_wisa@ub.ac.id

[3] Psychology, University of Brawijaya, Indonesia. Email: alimashuri76@ub.ac.id

time voters to participate in exercising their right to vote is a warning against democracy throughout the world. Stanley Feldem and Pamela Johnston4Conover simultaneously explain voters, candidates and the issues surrounding them, using a comprehensive theory of perception Meanwhile, Eko Herry Susanto5in, in research on the dynamics of political communication, found communicators who included legislative candidate candidates, community participation in using voting rights, and the qualitative results of elections.

The study of the characteristics of Generation Z on social media in facing the election is a study that has still escaped research by academics. Exposure to social media that cannot be separated from the lives of Generation Z makes it necessary to research this matter. For this reason, the author wants to discuss it by answering the following questions: how are the characteristics of Generation Z portrayed on social media in response to the dynamics of the 2024 election? Second, what factors influence the characteristics of Generation Z and their choices in the election? Third, how to shape good character in Generation Z to create healthy and peaceful elections. These three questions will be the discussion points reviewed in this article.

This research aims to narrate the characteristics of Generation Z on social media. The significant role of Generation Z in the 2024 election will make it essential to study their behaviour in responding to political issues. The dynamics of Generation Z's life, which are different from previous generations, will influence their behaviour in responding to these various issues. As depicted on social media, some seem enthusiastic about following political developments before the election, but some are indifferent. It is also necessary to know what factors influence Generation Z's attitudes. These factors then initiate steps to prevent something undesirable. There is a need for political education as a provision for them to face this country's political propaganda. Efforts to create a peaceful atmosphere during the election procession can begin by guiding these first-time voters.

This research uses two methods, namely descriptive and natural research. Data was collected using the Library Research technique (library research) by searching data, writings, books and other scientific works related to the topic discussed. Researchers will read, identify, analyse, and process research materials with the data obtained.

## Generation Z

Generation Z is the generation born between 1995 and 2010. Some say that Generation Z is the technology generation. They have grown up in a world filled with the internet and the web since they were still unable to speak. Meanwhile, the Pew Research Center uses 1996 as the last birth year of the Millennial generation. So anyone born between 1981 and 1996 is considered a Millennial, while people born in 1997 and onwards are considered a new generation, which is hereafter known as Generation Z/gen Z. Initially, they had three candidate names for this generation, namely Generation Z, iGeneration, and Homelanders. After conducting in-depth research regarding the new generation, they replaced the three terms with post-millennial. However, the term Gen Z has become more prevalent in journalism circles over the past year. The Merriam-Webster and Oxford Urban Dictionary use this name for generations after Millennials. Google Trends data shows that "Generation Z" far exceeds other names in user searches6.

Most members of Generation Z have been introduced to technology by their parents since childhood. It is not surprising that Generation Z has the characteristic that they cannot be separated from the internet all the time to create and share content with others or for work needs. They tend to be experts in operating technology and have a multitasking character when using advances in digital technology. The research results conducted by Bencsik and Machova show that their development is fast in accessing information and intelligent, skilled and creative in using technology. Generation Z is also the youngest generation that has just entered the world of work. Among Indonesian academics, generation Z dominates diploma and undergraduate students7. How they learn in class differs from previous generations; Generation Z students rely more on PC/HP recordings or taking photos of explanations on the whiteboard rather than taking notes.

Apart from work and education, most of Generation Z has entered the voting age in the upcoming 2024 elections in Indonesia. According to research by Rothman (2016), Generation Z's brain is often connected to sophisticated and complex visual images, making the part of the brain that processes visual abilities much more developed. So, it is not surprising that in the context of the 2024 election, they appear enthusiastic about

participating in politics. This is supported by the visual appearance of the communication tools they use daily. So, election participants from 2019 experienced an upward trend, as will the upcoming 2024 election. This aligns with the phenomena today, as Gen Z spends more time with social media in every activity. The implications for those growing up in an increasingly active technological environment show dramatic changes in behaviour, attitudes, and lifestyles, both positive and concerning.

## Characteristics of Generation Z on Social Media Ahead of the Election

Character is something that is related to a person's nature and attitudes. Character is everything inherent in a person that makes that person unique. Referring to Muchlas Samani and Hariyanto's opinion regarding character, they argue that character is the fundamental value that builds a person's personality, whether formed due to the influence of heredity or environmental influences, which differentiates them from other people and is manifested in their attitudes and behaviour in everyday life8. This definition explains that environmental factors significantly influence a person's character. If you look at the context of Generation Z, who likes surfing the media, their character may be affected by the media content they see.

The fundamental characteristic differentiating Generation Z from Generation X and the baby boomer generation is that they are more aware of information and social media networks connected via the internet. In an election year like this, social media has become an effective 'political machine' for conducting virtual campaigns carrying out political propaganda and penetration of issues. Generation Z, who are very familiar with cyberspace, is one of the hopes of politicians to gain votes. In conditions like this, as a typical digital native generation, which, of course, is very information literate and chats with smartphones or social media all the time, this generation is not only strategic in terms of quantity but also an essential object for carrying out propaganda on political issues as an effort to mobilise electoral support.

Almost all of Generation Z currently have social media to chat or view content in cyberspace, such as WhatsApp, Twitter, Facebook, and Line, so their character will be formed according to what often appears on their social media homepage. In 2018, a study by David Stillman and Jonah Stillman identified at least seven distinctive characteristics. These characteristics are phygital, Hyper-customization, Realism, Fear of Missing Out, Weconomist, it Yourself and driven9. Several of the traits mentioned will influence their attitude in determining their choice in the 2024 election. Generation Z, some of whom are still first-time voters, have a high awareness of monitoring developments in political news ahead of the election. They need more information about potential leadership candidates to choose the right leader. One way for them to get this is by exploring their social media.

The characteristics of Generation Z are very diverse, and scientists explaining the characteristics of Generation Z also have several differences. These various labels cannot be generalised because each Generation Z person has different characteristic tendencies. In his article, Ryan Jenkins, a writer and expert on Gen Z, wrote that Generation Z has other hopes, preferences and perspectives, so it is often considered challenging for specific groups. With tendencies like this, Generation Z will take more work to promote. They do not hesitate to be different from those closest to them, even if it is their parents. For example, in the context of elections, they are not afraid of other choices from their parents or those around them, in line with online surveys which say that young people have the confidence that they can be self-sufficient in making political choices, free from the influence of their peers or family members.

Generation Z also has characteristics that tend to be practical and instant10. They tend to like practical methods and don't like things that are complicated or require long processes in many ways. We can see this phenomenon in their social media practices, where they are more interested in social media that offers short-duration video content, such as TikTok, Instagram reels, YouTube shorts and others. Tendencies like this will be more easily provoked by various incoming news. Their views on politics will easily change according to FYP. They are also vulnerable to being consumed by hoax news or video clips whose context has been twisted. Their character, who likes to get to the point, makes them reluctant to cross-check the truth of the news on their social media homepage.

One generation that likes freedom is Generation Z11, such as freedom of opinion, expression and creativity. Generation Z was born in the modern world where most lessons are exploratory, making them highly self-confident and optimistic, as in expressing their opinions on social media accounts. There are various forms of voicing opinions; some openly criticise candidate pairs who do not meet the criteria. Some use memes to charge attractive packaging that seems relaxed but annoying. There are also those who parody candidate pairs and government officials according to their abilities and knowledge about various political issues that are currently emerging.

Experts have explained that there are many more characteristics of Generation Z. As they like details, some of them are equipped with critical and detailed minds to examine every phenomenon because the ease of internet access supports them. According to research (Swanzen, 2018), they tend to have high collective awareness. So, reading political news during the campaign period is not only to maintain one's existence but also to be aware of the need for information as a novice voter12. Because this generation was born amid a digital civilisation that was starting to develop, it is called the net generation13. So, it is not surprising that Generation Z is very adept at operating various aspects of technology in an effort to support daily communication. As the 2024 election contest approaches, Generation Z's votes are being fought over by-election participants. All election participants are competing to attract the attention of Generation Z. In this condition, many people suddenly pay attention to Generation Z to learn about their characteristics and focus on this country's politics. Therefore, as Generation Z has a novice political ideology, consuming the right political news is essential to making the right choices.

## Factors Influencing Gen Z Characteristics

Generation Z's characteristics leading up to the election are influenced by many factors, including the environment in which they live, educational background and religiosity. Apart from the influence of social media, which Generation Z loves a lot, these other factors also play a role in influencing their perspective on politics and their choices in the upcoming elections. Seeing the condition of Indonesian society, which is close-knit with many communities that often hold meetings, such as mosque associations, student groups, and community groups, can influence the choice of political candidates. Political discussions in these communities may be biased towards specific candidate pairs, which can affect the political views of community members.

Another factor to consider is media bias. The positive exposure that Generation Z often receives from the less objective content of specific media can influence them to choose candidates branded by that media. It is not uncommon for online media to be biased towards one candidate pair. This is allegedly due to the relationship between certain media and political party owners. Someone with media power will efficiently carry out systematic political propaganda to influence and attract the audience's sympathy. This will lead to vote support in the next general election. The relevant mass media will depict political actors through advertising broadcasts to show people their performance.

The content currently circulating on our social media also contains fake news (hoaxes) and hate speech and contains harmful elements such as provocation, the spread of radicalism, gambling, pornography and even prostitution. In elections, social media is often used by buzzers or supporters of certain parties to corner their political opponents, stir up issues and magnify blunders committed by their political opponents. We can observe this fact on social media, where supporters compete to find their opponents' mistakes to bring up and twist their reports. The increasingly massive number of social media users and the relatively low cost of accessing various things and seeing images of multiple places means that Generation Z can easily position themselves in the positions they want. They can easily choose their position as social media users, whether as news creators, news disseminators, or news listeners or readers.

Today's life is all digital, making Generation Z often found in online media. The results of a survey conducted by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) show that the primary source of reference for young people today is social media. The results of this survey compare presentations in 2018 and presentations in 2022. In 2018, only around 39.5 per cent of young people accessed social media and those who accessed information via television reached

41.3 per cent. Meanwhile, in 2022, this condition will experience drastic changes, where the use of social media to search for information will increase to 59 per cent, while access to information using television will decline to only 32 per cent. Apart from that, the ratio of internet users also appears to be increasing. In 2018, in the last three months, 86 per cent of young people had the opportunity to access the Internet. This figure will increase in 2022 to around 93.5 per cent, accompanied by a significant increase in social media account ownership. Popular applications such as WhatsApp have increased from year to year; in 2017, users reached 70.3 per cent; in 2018, it grew to 91.6 per cent; and in 2022, it skyrocketed to 98.3 per cent14. Likewise, other social media applications such as YouTube, Instagram, TikTok and others also increased sharply in the same period.

The survey results above illustrate how significant the role of online media is in influencing first-time voters in the upcoming 2024 election contestation. Various sectors in life are trying to change marketing strategies to attract young people, including in politics. This concerns Generation Z's communication patterns, which prefer digital communication styles to conventional ones15.

## The Urgency of Political Education on Social Media

Education is vital in understanding politics for first-time voters and society in general16. Birzea believes that political education is essential for society to analyse and influence political decision-making. Meanwhile, according to Kantaprawira, political education is a way to increase people's knowledge to participate optimally in the political system. Through political education, people will be able to form characters who can be active and become participatory citizens. In summary, political education can be implemented through two channels: formal education and non-formal education.

Political parties did not bear political education during the New Order era. Still, it was carried out by the government as stated in Law Number 3 of 1975 in conjunction with Law Number 3 of 1985. After the reform era, political education was normatively borne by political parties; only then did it begin to be included in political party law. Since the reform era through Law Number 3 of 1999, in conjunction with Law Number 31 of 2002 and Law Number 2 of 2008. Meanwhile the law explicitly mandates the importance of political education by paying attention to justice and gender equality to increase awareness of rights and obligations, increasing Political participation and citizen initiative, as well as increasing independence and maturity in national and state life, which are included in Law Number 2 of 2008.

In the law, political education is defined as learning and understanding the rights, obligations and responsibilities of every citizen in the life of the nation and state. This commitment is further emphasised in Chapter VIII Article 31 by stating that:

Political Parties carry out political education for the community by the scope of their responsibilities by paying attention to justice and gender equality with objectives including:

Increase awareness of people's rights and obligations in social, national and state life;

Increasing political participation and community initiative in social, national and state life;

Increasing independence and maturity and building national character to maintain national unity.

as referred to in paragraph 1, political education is carried out to build ethics and political culture in Pancasila.

The sound of the articles in the paragraph above indicates that political education is the obligation of political parties to carry out political education and channel the political aspirations of their members. However, according to Mohammad Hatta, political education must come from both parties. Because both the government and society have an interest in having political awareness17.

Then, what form does political education take? According to Kantaprawira, political education can be implemented in several ways, including In the form of reading newspapers, magazines and online media, radio and television broadcasts, institutions or associations in society such as mosques, churches and others as places to deliver sermons, and also institutions formal (school) or informal18. Seeing the contemporary problem where new voters are dominated by young people who like to socialise on mass media, political education should

expand to social media platforms so that it is closer to young people and more targeted. It cannot be denied that social media has a significant role in influencing Generation Z's political views in determining their preferred candidates. As previously explained, social media has become a place for buzzers to give invitations and lead public opinion. Various content denigrating each other's opponents and promoting their support is circulating on social media.

The lack of political education triggers the birth of conflicts and problems, both in the real world and in the virtual world, such as contradicting each other in the comments column. Political parties must provide political education to people in the digital world. This should not escape the government's attention to educating digital natives through social media, hoping to make social media an interactive place between politicians and their supporters. Social media promises a forum that is low-budget but can reach the broader community as a means of channelling opinions and aspirations. A small example of the political education process for citizens is utilising social media, such as an invitation to participate in voting. In this way, at least, they can make them aware of the importance of a vote in a general election.

Political education on social media is an activity that must be carried out now to prepare for the 2024 general election. Generation Z needs much guidance from people who are more experienced in politics. Their social media homepage is vulnerable to negative information about the election. Political education is increasingly required as a way that is considered adequate for providing education to internet users, mainly social media users. Political education on social media is as essential as other sciences because it concerns the nation's future. Generation Z is flooded with information while growing up with unlimited access to technology, making them have a different thinking style from previous generations.

The need to process, create, collaborate, and communicate based on ethics and understand when and how to use technology effectively is needed today. All stakeholders must pursue political education on social media to provide guidance and direction to Generation Z to create a conducive

society with a critical and creative mindset. Political education using social media must, of course, be packaged in an attractive way that suits the interests of Generation Z as first-time voters. Knowing the characteristics and interests of Generation Z is necessary so that education content is well-spent. Voters, including Generation Z, must be politically literate and accustomed to objectively analysing political campaigns.

## CONCLUSION

Generation Z has diverse characters, and each of them has its tendencies. However, in the election context, Generation Z generally has a character tendency to have their own hopes, preferences, and perspectives, making them not reluctant to make different choices from those around them. Some of them also tend to like practical and instant things. Generation Z with characters like this will be very quickly taken in by political propaganda. Generation Z also wants freedom, making it easy for them to express their political views on social media. Apart from the environment where they live, educational background and religiosity, the factors that influence the character of this generation, the increasingly massive factor of social media is also the cause of the formation of the characteristics of Generation Z, which tends to be different from previous generations. Therefore, before the 2024 political contest, political education on social media is crucial to equip Generation Z for the upcoming elections.

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