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## Enhancing Political Literacy Among Generation-Z Through Social Media: Evidence from Indonesia's Electoral Commission Instagram Account

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### ABSTRACT

The digitalization of political communication has significantly transformed how citizens engage with political information, particularly among younger generations. Generation Z (Gen Z), born between 1997 and 2012, represents a cohort of digital natives with high technological literacy but relatively limited political awareness. In Indonesia, where Gen Z constitutes a substantial share of the electorate, electoral institutions face challenges in delivering effective political education through conventional channels. This study examines the effectiveness of political education content disseminated via the @KPU\_KALSEL Instagram account in enhancing political literacy among Gen Z students. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, the study conducted semi-structured interviews with five undergraduate students from the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences at UNISKA (born in 2002), supported by content analysis and systematic observation carried out in November 2024. The findings indicate that Instagram-based political content contributes positively to increasing political awareness and understanding among Gen Z audiences. Factors influencing effectiveness include content accessibility, visual clarity, concise messaging, and topical relevance. Posts related to the Peaceful Campaign Declaration and information on the Quiet Period were perceived as particularly impactful. Participants demonstrated improved comprehension of electoral procedures, regulations, and democratic values. This study concludes that social media platforms, when strategically utilized, can serve as effective tools for political education and voter engagement among digitally native generations.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation has fundamentally changed the way society interacts, communicates, and obtains information, including in the political sphere. Digitalization not only affects communication patterns and social interaction, but also changes the way society accesses and understands political information (Bukido et al., 2019; Volodenkov, 2019). In Indonesia, the continuously increasing penetration of the internet and social media has created a new ecosystem in political education and participation, where digital platforms have become the primary public space for political discourse and mobilization, particularly among the younger generation.

The generation most affected by digital change is Generation Z (Gen-Z), namely those born between 1997 and 2012 (Buford, 2022). Alruthaya et al. (2021), Ameen & Anand (2020), Sakashita (2020) explain that Gen-Z, known as digital natives, is a generation that has grown up with digital technology as an integral part of their lives, proficient in multitasking, and possessing high information literacy in using various digital platforms. These unique characteristics place Gen-Z in a strategic position as agents of social and political change, while simultaneously presenting new challenges in efforts toward effective and meaningful political education.

Currently, Generation Z in Indonesia is entering an important phase as voters who have the right to vote in the democratic process. The presence of Gen-Z as new voters presents both challenges and opportunities in improving the quality of the democratic system. With characteristics different from previous generations, Gen-Z requires a political education approach that is not only informative, but also engaging, accessible, and relevant to the way they consume information (Kayyali, 2025). Social media platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, and YouTube have become the primary sources of political information for this generation, shifting the role of conventional mass media that has long dominated the political communication landscape.

Although Gen-Z is known as a technologically literate generation with broad access to information, paradoxically, many among them still lack adequate political literacy. Low political literacy can trigger low participation of Gen-Z in the political process, including in exercising their right to vote (Haniifah & Melissa, 2025). Lack of understanding about the political system, electoral mechanisms, and the importance of democratic participation can result in political apathy or even political decisions that are not based on accurate and comprehensive information.

This condition presents a major challenge for electoral organizing institutions, particularly the General Elections Commission (KPU) as the institution responsible for organizing elections in Indonesia. The KPU has a mandate not only to organize honest and fair elections, but also to educate the public, especially first-time voters, about the democratic process. In the context of digital natives, conventional political education strategies that rely on face-to-face socialization or print media become less effective and suboptimal in reaching Gen-Z (Chardonnens, 2025; Velasco et al., 2024; Venus et al., 2025).

Responding to this challenge, the KPU at various levels – national and regional – has begun to utilize social media as the primary means to disseminate information

and educate the public about general elections. The South Kalimantan Provincial KPU, through its official Instagram account @kpu\_kalsel, is an example of adaptation efforts to the changing digital political communication landscape. This account serves as the official regional-level media to reach the community, particularly Gen-Z in South Kalimantan, by presenting various educational content about the electoral process, election regulations, and the importance of democratic participation.

Nevertheless, the use of social media for political education at the regional level, particularly its impact on increasing Gen-Z political literacy, has not been extensively studied academically. Previous research has focused more on the use of social media in the context of electoral political campaigns (Jensen & Anstead, 2014; Macnamara & Kenning, 2014; Xenos et al., 2017), digital political participation and Gen-Z activism (Jude & P, 2025; Mani et al., 2025; Taneerat & Dongnadeng, 2024), and the relationship between social media credibility and youth political engagement (Alfred & Ping, 2022). Meanwhile, the educational aspect of political education and systematic improvement of political literacy at the regional level has not been the main focus of these studies.

Furthermore, the regional context of South Kalimantan has specific political and social dynamics that can influence how political education is received and understood by Gen-Z. Research at the local level can provide deeper understanding of how political communication strategies need to be adapted to demographic, socio-cultural characteristics, and media usage patterns in specific regions.

To shape Gen-Z's engagement, awareness, and understanding of politics, a well-targeted and contextual political education process is required. This research specifically focuses on students of the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences (FISIP) at the Islamic University of Kalimantan (UNISKA) Banjarmasin as a representation of Gen-Z with unique characteristics. FISIP students were selected because they have a higher baseline knowledge of politics compared to students from other faculties, thus enabling them to provide more reflective and critical responses to political education content they consume on social media. Additionally, as digital natives who are active on social media, these students constitute an ideal target audience for analyzing the effectiveness of digital political communication strategies.

The selection of UNISKA Banjarmasin was also based on the consideration that this university is one of the leading higher education institutions in South Kalimantan with diverse students from various regions of the province, thus providing a representative picture of South Kalimantan Gen-Z's perception and understanding of digital political education.

This research aims to comprehensively analyze the role of the @kpu\_kalsel Instagram account in presenting political education content and its impact on improving political literacy among Gen-Z students at FISIP UNISKA Banjarmasin. Specifically, this research seeks to answer three main questions: First, what types of political education content are delivered through the @kpu\_kalsel account? Second, how do Gen-Z students at UNISKA Banjarmasin perceive and respond to such

content? Third, to what extent is digital political education through social media capable of improving Gen-Z's political understanding and awareness?

By answering these questions, the research is expected to contribute both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, this research enriches the literature on political communication in the digital era, particularly in the Indonesian context and Generation Z whom the author refers to as digital natives. Practically, the findings of this research can provide strategic recommendations for the KPU and other related institutions in optimizing the use of social media for more effective political education.

This research has high urgency considering that Gen-Z is currently not only first-time voters, but also a demographic force that will determine the direction of Indonesian politics in the coming decades. With good political understanding and active participation, Gen-Z has the potential to become agents of change who drive better governance, transparency, and accountability. Conversely, low political literacy can result in political manipulation, the spread of misinformation (hoaxes), and irrational political decisions. Therefore, understanding how social media can be effectively utilized to improve Gen-Z's political literacy becomes crucial in the context of Indonesia's democratic consolidation.

## 2. METHODS

This research employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive design to explore in depth the phenomenon of political education through social media and its impact on Generation Z's political literacy. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to understand the subjective meanings, perceptions, and experiences of informants regarding political education content delivered through the @kpu\_kalsel Instagram account (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The descriptive design is used to systematically describe the characteristics of political education content, Gen-Z students' response patterns, and the process of political understanding improvement that occurs. The interpretivist paradigm serves as the epistemological foundation of this research, acknowledging that social reality—including political understanding—is constructed through individuals' interactions and interpretations of the information they receive. The research location was established at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences (FISIP), Islamic University of Kalimantan (UNISKA) Banjarmasin, South Kalimantan. The selection of this location was based on several considerations: first, FISIP students have higher baseline political knowledge, thus enabling them to provide reflective responses to political content; second, UNISKA is a representative higher education institution in South Kalimantan with students from various regional backgrounds; and third, accessibility and feasibility of research implementation. Data collection was conducted on November 14, 2024, through in-depth interviews, while content analysis of the @kpu\_kalsel account covered the period from January to October 2024, encompassing the campaign phase and implementation of the 2024 Legislative Elections.

Research informants were selected using purposive sampling technique with specific criteria: (1) active FISIP UNISKA Banjarmasin students born in 2002, representing Generation Z; (2) active Instagram users with a minimum usage intensity of 2 hours per day; (3) followers of the @kpu\_kalsel account or having been exposed to content from that account; and (4) possessing voting rights and registered as voters

in the 2024 Legislative Elections. Based on these criteria, this research involved 5 (five) informants consisting of students from Political Science, Public Administration, and Communication Studies programs. This number of informants is considered adequate in qualitative research because the focus is on depth of information (depth over breadth) and data saturation has been achieved, where the information obtained begins to repeat and no longer produces new findings. Data collection was conducted through three main methods: first, semi-structured in-depth interviews with a duration of 30-45 minutes per informant using an interview guide covering five main themes – awareness of the @kpu\_kalsel account, frequency of content consumption, understanding of specific political messages (Peaceful Campaign Declaration, polling station access, quiet period), impact on political knowledge, and changes in political behavior or attitudes. Second, non-participatory observation of content published by the @kpu\_kalsel account, recording content types (informative, educational, campaign), formats (images, carousels, videos, reels), themes (electoral process, voter education, announcements), and engagement metrics (likes, comments, shares). Third, documentation in the form of screenshots of key content analyzed, engagement data, and supporting documents related to KPU regulations. All interviews were recorded with informants' permission and transcribed verbatim to ensure data accuracy.

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis techniques following the stages of Braun and Clarke (2006), consisting of six systematic steps: (1) data familiarization – reading and re-reading interview transcripts to understand the overall data; (2) initial coding – identifying meaning units and assigning descriptive codes to relevant data segments; (3) searching for themes – grouping codes that have patterns of similarity into potential themes; (4) reviewing themes – verifying whether the identified themes are supported by data and internally coherent; (5) defining themes – providing clear names and definitions for each final theme; and (6) writing the report – integrating analysis with literature and presenting findings narratively with support from informant quotations. The coding process used a combined approach between deductive codes (derived from the theoretical framework of political literacy and digital political communication) and inductive codes (emerging from empirical data). To ensure the trustworthiness of the research, four criteria of Lincoln and Guba (1989) were applied: credibility was maintained through triangulation of data sources (interviews, observation, documentation) and member checking – confirming researchers' interpretations to informants; transferability was fulfilled by presenting rich descriptions (thick description) of the research setting and informant characteristics; dependability was ensured through documentation of an audit trail recording each research stage; and confirmability was strengthened through researcher reflexivity – acknowledging the researcher's position and potential bias – as well as storage of raw data for verification. Ethical considerations included obtaining informed consent from each informant, guarantees of anonymity and data confidentiality, informants' right to withdraw at any time, and data protection according to research ethics standards.

Table 1. Research Informant Profiles

No	Initial	Age	Study Program	Instagram Intensity	Usage
1	AB	22 years	Popiltcal Science	3-4 hours/day	
2	FR	22 years	Public Administration	2-3 hours/day	
3	JA	22 years	Communication Studies	4-5 hours/day	
4	YOP	22 years	Popiltcal Science	3-4 hours/day	
5	BS	22 years	Public Administration	2-3 hours/day	

Source: Primary research data, interview November 14, 2024

Table 1 shows the profiles of five research informants who are all active FISIP UNISKA Banjarmasin students born in 2002, thus falling within the age range of 22 years and categorized as Generation Z. These five informants, initialed AB, FR, JA, YOP, and BS, come from three different study programs – Political Science (AB and YOP), Public Administration (FR and BS), and Communication Studies (JA) – reflecting the diversity of academic backgrounds within the scope of social and political sciences. All informants are active Instagram users with usage intensity varying between 2 to 5 hours per day, indicating that they are digital natives with high engagement with social media as a source of daily information. This variation in usage intensity – with JA having the highest intensity (4-5 hours/day) and FR and BS with the lowest intensity (2-3 hours/day) – provides diverse perspectives regarding digital political content consumption patterns among Gen-Z. The diversity of study programs and social media usage patterns among informants enables this research to capture richer nuances about how political education through the @kpu\_kalsel account is perceived and understood by students with different backgrounds and digital intensities, while ensuring that research findings are not limited to the perspective of one academic group alone.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### Types and Characteristics of Political Education Content on @KPU\_KALSEL

Based on observations of content published by the @kpu\_kalsel Instagram account during the period from January to October 2024, four main types of political education content were identified as the focus of the South Kalimantan KPU's communication strategy in reaching young voters, particularly Generation Z.

First, Peaceful Campaign Declaration Content that conveys messages about the importance of smooth, honest, and fair elections. This content emphasizes five key values: electoral integrity, conducive situations, rejection of disturbances, acceptance

of legitimate election results, and shared responsibility for maintaining democratic order. From a global political communication perspective, this content aligns with the practices of Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs) in democratic countries that use social media to promote electoral integrity – such as those conducted by the Electoral Commission UK and the Australian Electoral Commission – where education is not only about technical procedures but also about the formation of democratic norms and culture (Garnett, 2019; Langford et al., 2021).

Second, Election Quiet Period Content posted on February 12, 2024, provides comprehensive education about campaign regulations during the period of February 11-13, 2024. This content explains the prohibition of campaigning in any form for election participants, as well as restrictions on mass media, online media, social media, and broadcasting institutions from airing content that benefits specific candidates. What is interesting is that this content not only conveys what is prohibited, but also explains the rationale behind it – providing space for voters to reflect and creating equal conditions for all candidates. This educational approach that explains the 'why' behind regulations reflects best practices in civic education that emphasize deliberative understanding rather than merely procedural compliance (Waldvogel et al., 2023).

Third, Polling Station Access Content that provides practical information about voting locations and voting procedures. This content is designed to reduce participation barriers by providing easily accessible information about how and where to exercise voting rights.

Fourth, the 'Tepatilah Janji' Event held on October 29, 2024, through a film screening with students from ULM and UIN Antasari Banjarmasin. This initiative represents an entertainment-education strategy – an approach that has proven effective in civic engagement in various countries, from Get Out The Vote campaigns in the United States to Rock The Vote programs involving celebrity endorsement (Barker, 2020; He et al., 2022). This transmedia strategy – integrating online content with offline experiences – reflects a sophisticated understanding of how Generation Z consumes information: non-linearly and not limited to one platform.

The characteristic that unites these four types of content is the focus on accessibility, visual appeal, message clarity, and contextual relevance. The content uses simple language without technical jargon, attractive visual design dominated by infographics, structured information with highlighted main points, and strategic posting timing aligned with the electoral calendar. This aligns with user-centered design principles in public communication that emphasize that communication effectiveness is determined not only by what the institution wants to convey, but how the audience wants to receive information (Grainger et al., 2020; Naasz et al., 2016).

Furthermore, the content strategy of @KPU\_KALSEL reflects a significant evolution in how electoral management institutions understand and respond to shifts in the information ecology in the digital era. Unlike traditional political communication approaches that tend to be top-down and instructive, the published content demonstrates awareness of the need to adopt visual language and narratives

that resonate with Generation Z's aesthetic sensibilities. The use of Instagram as the primary platform is not an arbitrary decision, but rather a strategic alignment with young voters' platform preference that prioritizes visual storytelling over text-heavy content. The four identified types of content—from the Peaceful Campaign Declaration to the 'Tepatilah Janji' event—together form a holistic political education ecosystem: informative content (Quiet Period, Polling Station Access) builds political knowledge, normative content (Peaceful Campaign Declaration) shapes democratic values, and experiential content (film event) creates emotional engagement. The integration of these three dimensions—cognitive, normative, and affective—reflects an understanding that political literacy is not merely the mastery of procedural facts, but also the internalization of democratic values and a sense of agency to participate. The characteristics of accessibility and visual appeal that characterize this content also respond to the challenges of the attention economy on social media, where government institutions must compete with an infinite scroll of entertainment content to gain and maintain user attention.

### **Generation Z's Perception and Response to @kpu\_kalsel Content**

Important findings from this research show that all informants (100%, n=5) have awareness of the existence of the @kpu\_kalsel account and demonstrate the ability to comprehend the key messages conveyed. Aria Bimo revealed, "Social media like Instagram is very necessary to reach us Gen-Z. @KPU\_KALSEL content is easy to understand and not boring." This statement reveals three critical insights: first, Gen-Z's expectation that public institutions must be present on the platforms they use; second, comprehensibility and engagement as key criteria in processing political information; and third, appreciation for communication adaptation efforts that align with young generation preferences.

The informants' ability to articulate their understanding in their own words demonstrates a deep level of information processing. When asked about the message of the Peaceful Election Declaration, Fauzan Raihan answered, "Smooth and fair elections without bringing each other down and without committing fraud." This response shows that the informant not only remembers the slogan but is able to reconstruct meaning—capturing the essence of electoral integrity (fairness, honesty) and its practical implications (prohibition of negative campaigning and fraud). Jemari Adriani added a different perspective: "The call for peaceful elections in that content is very interesting so that the audience can easily grasp the message." This emphasizes the importance of presentation in political communication—how the message is framed is as important as the message content itself.

What is more interesting is the sophisticated understanding of the quiet period function. Aria Bimo stated, "It is very necessary so that there is a break for the candidates and the public without any campaigning." This response transcends regulatory knowledge (knowing that) toward rational understanding (knowing why)—understanding the quiet period as a cooling-off period that provides space for reflection. Yeni Oktaviani Putri demonstrates value internalization: "Commitment to creating a safe and conducive situation." The use of the word 'commitment' indicates a transformation from knowing to valuing—a higher level of political literacy where individuals adopt democratic values as part of their political identity.

The most significant finding is the sense of empowerment generated by digital political education. Bima Sakti revealed, "Through that content, we have the opportunity to make the right decision in choosing." This statement contains an important dimension of political empowerment: informational empowerment (access to credible information), cognitive empowerment (understanding that increases confidence), and agentic empowerment (awareness of the ability to make meaningful choices). From a global perspective, this aligns with the concept of 'informed citizenship' emphasized in civic engagement literature—that quality democratic participation requires citizens who not only vote but vote with understanding and consideration (Altaany & Abdelbary, 2024; Kerr & Hoskins, 2023).

In-depth analysis of informant response patterns reveals a phenomenon more complex than mere information transfer—namely an active meaning-making process where Gen-Z does not passively receive political messages but critically interprets, evaluates, and integrates them into their own framework of understanding. The variation in articulation of understanding—from Fauzan's focus on procedural integrity to Yeni's emphasis on value commitment—shows that @kpu\_kalsel content successfully triggers multilevel engagement that allows each individual to find an entry point that resonates with their prior knowledge and value orientation. This phenomenon is important because it confirms that the effectiveness of digital political education lies not in uniformity of understanding but in plurality of meaningful interpretations that all converge on core democratic principles. Furthermore, the informants' ability to use evaluative language—"interesting," "easy to understand," "very necessary"—indicates that they are not only consumers but also critics who implicitly apply quality criteria to political communication. The sense of empowerment articulated by Bima Sakti represents the highest outcome of political literacy: transformation from spectator to informed agent who understands that their electoral participation is not a symbolic ritual but a political act with substantive consequences. This finding has important theoretical implications for understanding digital political socialization—that exposure to credible, accessible political content on familiar platforms can catalyze a developmental leap from political awareness to political efficacy, a psychological condition that has consistently proven to be the strongest predictor of sustained civic participation.

### **Effectiveness of Digital Political Education in Enhancing Gen-Z Political Literacy**

Based on the synthesis of findings, political education through @kpu\_kalsel has proven effective in improving Generation Z's political literacy at UNISKA Banjarmasin through three dimensions identified by Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996): knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

**Knowledge Dimension.** Informants demonstrated improvement in three areas: first, procedural knowledge about electoral mechanisms (stages, voting procedures, polling station locations); second, regulatory knowledge about campaign rules, quiet periods, and specific prohibitions; third, normative knowledge about democratic values such as integrity, fairness, and peaceful competition. What is interesting is that this knowledge was acquired through micro-learning—information packaged in short and visual formats that can be consumed in seconds. This demonstrates an evolution

from 'comprehensive political knowledge' acquired through formal and systematic learning, toward 'contextual political knowledge' that is more practical and situational—a phenomenon increasingly common in the digital era (Grönlund & Milner, 2006).

**Skills Dimension.** Although not explicitly measured, informants demonstrated the ability to: correctly interpret political messages, articulate concepts in their own words, relate knowledge to practical contexts, and evaluate information based on quality criteria ('good' vs 'bad' elections). These are high-level political literacy skills that transcend mere factual recall.

**Attitudes Dimension.** Most significant is the formation of positive attitudes toward: democratic participation, electoral integrity, civic responsibility, and electoral organizing institutions. The use of phrases such as 'commitment', 'responsibility', and 'trust' in informants' responses indicates the internalization of democratic values. From the perspective of behavior change theories, attitudes are strong predictors of intention and actual behavior—Gen-Z with positive attitudes toward political participation are more likely to vote and engage in other civic activities (Barley & Lawson, 2016).

This effectiveness can be explained through the alignment between KPU's communication strategy and Generation Z's characteristics as digital natives. Prensky (Prensky, 2001) identifies that Gen-Z has preferences for: parallel processing and multitasking (vs. linear processing), graphics before text (vs. text first), immediate and frequent connections, and instant gratification. @kpu\_kalsel content—which is visual-centric, concise, and mobile-optimized—precisely matches these preferences. Additionally, credibility source (official KPU account) provides important legitimacy in the era of misinformation. Uses and Gratifications Theory explains that individuals actively select media that fulfill their needs; Gen-Z follows @kpu\_kalsel because the content fulfills multiple gratifications: information (surveillance of political environment), identity (construction of informed citizen identity), and engagement (aesthetically pleasing content) (Whiting & Williams, 2013).

The success of digital political education through @kpu\_kalsel also reveals a fourth dimension not explicit in the Delli Carpini and Keeter framework but highly relevant in the digital era—namely the navigational literacy dimension, the ability to identify, access, and validate credible political information sources amid information overload and the misinformation epidemic. Informants not only passively received @kpu\_kalsel content but actively integrated it as a reference point to evaluate other political narratives they encountered in their social media feeds. This phenomenon demonstrates that effective political education not only transfers knowledge content but also builds metacognitive awareness—the ability to reflect on one's own political understanding and recognize gaps or inconsistencies. From a pedagogical perspective, the micro-learning format implemented by @kpu\_kalsel represents a paradigmatic shift from an instructional approach (teaching what citizens should know) toward a facilitative approach (enabling citizens to construct their own understanding). The strategic alignment between medium (Instagram), message (visual-centric, digestible content), and audience characteristics (Gen-Z's digital nativeness) creates what communication scholars call the "sweet spot" of political

communication—the optimal condition where cognitive load is minimal, engagement is high, and retention is maximal. More importantly, this finding challenges academic skepticism toward "shallow engagement" on social media; the data shows that brevity does not necessarily mean superficiality—micro-content can trigger deep understanding if designed with pedagogical intentionality and grounded in understanding of learner characteristics. This opens new possibilities for reconceptualizing civic education in the context of the attention economy, where effectiveness is measured not from duration of exposure but from meaningfulness of engagement.

### **Effectiveness of Digital Political Education in Enhancing Gen-Z Political Literacy**

#### *Global Theoretical Implications*

The findings of this research contribute to the global political communication literature by demonstrating that in the digital era, the political communication model requires fundamental rethinking. The traditional linear model (sender → message → channel → receiver → effect) is no longer adequate to explain how political learning occurs on social media. This research proposes a more circular and interactive model: political institutions (KPU) act as content creators who must understand platform dynamics and algorithms; political messages are packaged as engaging and shareable visual narratives; platforms (Instagram) function as algorithm-mediated spaces with their own logic; audiences (Gen-Z) are active users who curate, interpret, and potentially amplify content; and feedback (likes, comments, shares) becomes measurable engagement that informs content refinement. This model more accurately describes the complexity of political communication in the era of platform capitalism (Srnicek, 2017).

The circular-interactive political communication model proposed by this research represents a significant conceptual contribution in understanding political communication in networked publics. Unlike the classical linear model that assumes unidirectional flow and passive audience, this model acknowledges the agency of multiple actors in co-creating political meanings. What is crucial is the recognition of algorithms as invisible actors that mediate the visibility and virality of political content—political messages are no longer only filtered by editorial judgments but by machine learning systems that optimize engagement metrics. This creates a paradox where political institutions must simultaneously play according to platform logic (creating algorithm-friendly content) while maintaining mission integrity (delivering substantive civic education). This model also integrates feedback loops that enable real-time adaptation—something impossible in the mass media era—where metrics such as completion rates, shares, and saves provide granular insights about what works and what doesn't. Furthermore, the acknowledgment of the audience's active curation role challenges the deficit model in civic education that assumes citizens are empty vessels; conversely, Gen-Z are prosumers who not only consume but also produce and circulate political content, making them potential amplifiers or critics of institutional messages.

### ***Practical Implications for Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs)***

This research provides evidence-based recommendations applicable not only to Indonesia but also to EMs in countries with similar demographic profiles (young population, high social media penetration). First, platform-first strategy – prioritize digital channels in voter education budgets, with recognition that for Gen-Z, social media is the primary source of information. Second, design excellence – invest in visual design capabilities because aesthetic quality directly impacts engagement. Third, transmedia integration – combine online content with offline experiences for creating multiple touchpoints. Fourth, metrics-driven optimization – use analytics to continuously refine content strategy. Fifth, collaborative partnerships – leverage universities and civil society organizations for message amplification.

The evidence-based recommendations generated by this research carry fundamental resource allocation and organizational restructuring implications for EMs globally. Platform-first strategy is not merely shifting budgets from print to digital, but requires wholesale rethinking of voter education infrastructure – from hiring practices (recruiting digital content specialists, data analysts, community managers) to procurement processes (investing in design tools, analytics platforms, content management systems). Design excellence necessitates recognizing that in the attention economy, aesthetic appeal is not a frivolous concern but a prerequisite for message reception – poorly designed content, regardless of substantive quality, will simply not be seen. Transmedia integration addresses the limitation of single-platform approaches; research shows that repeated exposure across multiple channels (online and offline) creates reinforcement effects that increase message retention and attitude formation. Metrics-driven optimization requires an organizational culture shift from intuition-based decision making toward data-informed strategies – requiring EMs to develop analytics capabilities and willingness to experiment, fail fast, and iterate. Collaborative partnerships acknowledge that EMs cannot and should not monopolize civic education; leveraging the credibility and reach of universities, youth organizations, and influencers can exponentially amplify impact while maintaining message fidelity through clear communication guidelines.

### ***Indonesian Contextualization***

These findings have particular relevance for Indonesia, which faces triple challenges: first, demographic dividend – Gen-Z will become the majority of voters determining electoral outcomes in the future; second, misinformation epidemic – Indonesia is one of the countries with the highest spread of political hoaxes, making the presence of credible sources such as official KPU accounts very crucial; third, archipelagic geography – social media can overcome geographical barriers in reaching voters across thousands of islands with cost-effectiveness unattainable by physical campaigns. In the context of Indonesia's democratic consolidation, Gen-Z political literacy is not only about individual empowerment but also about strengthening democratic institutions and preventing democratic backsliding (Mietzner, 2022).

The Indonesian context adds layers of complexity and urgency that make the findings of this research particularly consequential. The demographic dividend is not a guaranteed blessing but a potential curse if the Gen-Z electorate is not adequately

prepared for meaningful participation—a youth bulge without political literacy can be manipulated into populist mobilization or electoral violence as seen in several global south countries. The misinformation epidemic in Indonesia is exacerbated by low media literacy and high social trust in peer networks, making false narratives spread faster than corrections—in this context, official KPU presence on social media is not a luxury but a necessity for establishing an alternative source of electoral truth. Archipelagic geography creates participation disparities where voters on remote islands are historically underserved by civic education campaigns; digital platforms democratize access, but also require addressing digital divides—unequal internet access and device ownership can create new forms of civic inequality. Democratic consolidation concerns are very real given Indonesia's trajectory from authoritarian rule to procedural democracy has not been fully accompanied by democratic deepening at the civic culture level; strengthening Gen-Z political literacy is a long-term investment in democratic resilience that can buffer against potential backsliding triggered by economic crises, identity politics mobilization, or authoritarian nostalgia increasingly visible in regional politics.

**Limitations and Future Research Agenda.** This research has several limitations: limited sample size ( $n=5$ ) from one institution restricts generalizability; informant characteristics as FISIP students with high baseline political knowledge may make them more receptive; cross-sectional design does not allow assessment of long-term impact or actual voting behavior; and the focus on Instagram ignores users of other platforms. Future research should: (1) conduct larger-scale quantitative studies to test generalizability across diverse populations; (2) use longitudinal designs to track knowledge retention and actual behavior; (3) conduct experimental studies to establish causal relationships; (4) comparative studies across platforms (TikTok, Twitter, YouTube) to identify optimal channel mix; and (5) investigate misinformation resilience—whether exposure to credible content increases the ability to resist false information.

Explicit acknowledgment of this research's limitations represents intellectual honesty essential in advancing scholarship and avoiding overgeneralization from preliminary findings. Small sample size and FISIP student characteristics raise selection bias concerns—informants with baseline high political interest and formal training in social sciences are most likely not representative of the broader Gen-Z population that includes vocational students, working youth, and NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) who might have fundamentally different relationships with political content. Cross-sectional design limitation is particularly critical because political learning is a longitudinal process—snapshot measurement does not capture knowledge decay, attitude volatility, or actual behavioral translation from stated intentions to voting booth actions. Instagram-only focus ignores platform migration patterns where Gen-Z is increasingly shifting to TikTok for quick entertainment and Twitter/X for real-time news, raising questions about optimal platform mix strategies. The proposed future research agenda addresses these limitations systematically: larger quantitative studies with probability sampling can establish external validity; longitudinal panels tracking the same individuals across election cycles can reveal retention and behavioral outcomes; experimental designs

with randomized exposure can establish causality that correlational studies cannot claim; comparative platform studies can identify unique affordances and constraints of each channel; and misinformation resilience investigation addresses perhaps the most pressing concern—whether exposure to credible content creates cognitive immunity or merely adds noise in an already cluttered information environment.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates that political education through social media, when designed considering audience preferences and information consumption behavior, can effectively improve Generation Z's political literacy. @kpu\_kalsel content that is accessible, visual, clear, and relevant has succeeded not only in reaching but also educating young voters about democratic processes, regulations, and values. More than mere knowledge transfer, this education generates empowerment—a sense that they have agency to make informed decisions and contribute to the quality of democracy. In a global context where young voters in many countries demonstrate political disengagement, this finding offers hope: with the right communication strategy, political institutions can reconnect with the younger generation and cultivate informed, engaged citizens who become the foundation for sustainable democracy. For Indonesia with its large Gen-Z population, investment in digital political education is not only about increasing voter turnout but about shaping the future of Indonesian democracy.

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