

Digital Democracy in Indonesia: Challenges and Opportunities For Generation Z Political Participation

Devi Yulida

Faculty of Law, Universitas Sumatera Utara
deviyulida@usu.ac.id

Vita Cita Emia Tarigan

Faculty of Law, Universitas Sumatera Utara
vcet@usu.ac.id

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Abstract

This study analyzes social media's influence on Generation Z's political views in Indonesia. It examines regulations related to the spread of misinformation in Indonesia and other countries. The study's main topics are the political opinions of Generation Z as expressed on social media, the laws governing free speech in the age of digital democracy, and a comparison of Indonesian and foreign laws of social media freedom. The method used in this study is normative juridical research, with an approach of literature study, legal analysis, and online surveys to explore Generation Z's views on digital democracy. The study results show that Generation Z actively discusses political issues on social media but is vulnerable to polarization and misinformation. Indonesia has implemented regulations, such as the Electronic Information and Transactions Law, which



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provides sanctions for disseminating misleading information and works with social media platforms for education and content monitoring. However, compared to other countries, such as the United States and European countries, Indonesia has stricter regulations on freedom of expression. This research is expected to provide insight into the dynamics of Generation Z's use of social media and the importance of appropriate regulations in dealing with misinformation.

Keywords

digital democracy, political participation, social media, Indonesia

I. Introduction

The development of digital technology has affected modern life today. Technology enters all aspects of human life, ranging from communication, economy, education, culture, and politics. Technological advances have brought ease to humans in communicating, one of which is through social media. Social media can be interpreted as a means of communication used to interact between individuals, regardless of space and time.¹ The characteristics of social media are:² First, messages

¹ Devi Yulida, Anak Agung Gede Ananta Wijaya Sahadewa, and Xavier Nugraha, 'Kedudukan Akun Media Sosial Sebagai Warisan Digital Dalam Perspektif Hukum Perdata Di Indonesia', *Kertha Wicaksana* 18, no. 2 (14 August 2024): 52-61, accessed doi:10.22225/kw.18.2.2024.52-61.

² Tamaulina Br Sembiring, Irma Rachmawati Maruf, and Moh Amin, 'Understanding the Role of Social Media in Shaping Millennial Generation Legal Awareness in the Digital Age' 5, no. 3 (August 2022): 18501-11, accessed doi:10.33258/birci.v5i3.5836.

delivered are free without going through the gatekeeper. Second, the message is delivered quickly, crossing the boundaries of space and time. Third, the interaction time is determined by the sender and receiver of the message. Judging from these characteristics, social media can be interpreted as a medium used to communicate quickly and easily, regardless of space and time, and users can determine the information they want to disseminate.

According to data from Datareportal, at the beginning of 2024, 185.3 million Indonesians had received internet penetration, of which 138.9 million were active social media users.³ The data shows that Indonesians are familiar with social media as an inseparable part of life. Social media has changed how people access information, interact, and participate in public life, including in the political field.

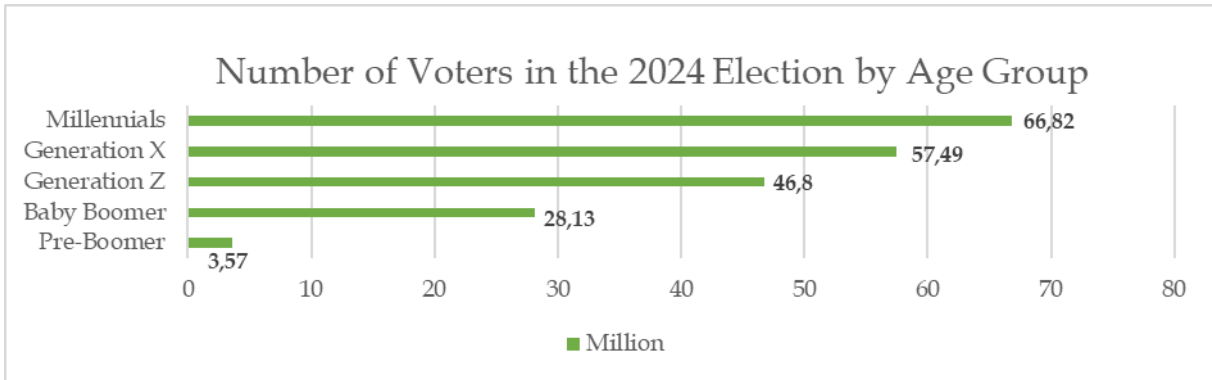
Regarding technological developments and the rampant use of social media, Generation Z (Gen Z) is a generation familiar with technology. Gen Z is a term for the generation born from 1995 to 2010.⁴ Research shows that this generation spends hours daily on platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram.⁵ Besides entertainment, social media is also a source of information and education, including politics. The General Election Commission, or in Indonesia known as Komisi Pemilihan Umum, explained that in 2024, there will be at least 204,807,222 people in the permanent

³ Simon Kemp, 'Digital 2024: Indonesia', *DataReportal*, 21 February 2024.

⁴ Mark McCrindle and Ashley Fell, *Understanding Generation Z: Recruiting, Training and Leading the Next Generation*. (Norwest NSW: McCrindle Research, 2019).

⁵ Harun Harsono, 'Politik Identitas Dan Partisipasi Politik Di Media Sosial: Analisis Model Struktural Pada Generasi Z Di Kota Malang', *Electoral Governance Jurnal Tata Kelola Pemilu Indonesia* 4, no. 2 (2023): 166-87, accessed www.journal.kpu.go.id.

voter list category. The percentage of the age group can be seen below:



Source: Muhammad Nabilah, "KPU: 2024 Election Voters Dominated by Gen Z and Millennial Groups". Databox. 2024.

The data above shows that if accumulated, the total number of voters from the Millennial Generation and Gen Z groups is more than 113 million. These two generations dominate voters in the 2024 election, which is as much as 56.45% of the total voters. A quo data shows that Gen Z ranks third, with a total vote of 46.8 million voters.

In line with this, the legal adagio *states tempora mutantur, nos et mutamur in illis*, which essentially means that the development of the times causes changes in people's lives.⁶ Social media platforms have become a dynamic digital public space, allowing Generation Z to express political views, organize collective actions, and influence public agendas. Research shows that social media serves as a vital channel for

⁶ Matteo Marengo and Timo Seidl, 'The Discursive Construction of Digitalization: A Comparative Analysis of National Discourses on the Digital Future of Work', *European Political Science Review* 13, no. 3 (1 August 2021): 391–409, accessed doi:10.1017/S175577392100014X.

disseminating political information and facilitating the active participation of young people in social and environmental issues.⁷ The 2024 election in Indonesia is clear evidence of how social media shapes public opinion and influences the political choices of the younger generation.⁸

However, social media's positive potential for increasing political participation is inseparable from challenges. The spread of false information or misinformation is a serious problem that threatens the integrity of information in the democratic process. Regulation of misinformation in the digital world is crucial. Studies have emphasized the complexity and challenges of managing misinformation and the need for effective strategies.

Irrationality in politics often hinders efforts to combat misinformation, such as debunking and source labeling, because individuals usually process information with bias.⁹ This shows that regulations must consider psychological aspects in information processing to be effective. The highly dynamic nature of online content requires a solid legal framework to counter misinformation, with fact-checking as one viable strategy.¹⁰ International cooperation is essential for

⁷ Alrisa Ayu, 'KaPeu: Political Awareness Strategies for Generation Z through Social Media in the 2024 Elections', *Muharrrik: Jurnal Dakwah Dan Sosial* 6, no. 2 (31 December 2023): 233–48, accessed doi:10.37680/muharrrik.v6i2.4097.

⁸ Erisandi Arditama, Puji Lestari, and Aris Munandar, 'Political Ethics in Indonesia: A Study of Political Ethics of Digital Citizenship in the 2024 Election', *JESS (Journal of Educational Social Studies)* JESS 13, no. 1 (2024), accessed <http://journal.unnes.ac.id/sju/index.php/jess>.

⁹ Bartłomiej Chomanski, 'Regulating Misinformation: Political Irrationality as a Feasibility Constraint', *Topoi*, 2024, accessed doi:10.1007/s11245-024-10083-2.

¹⁰ Hadi Purnama, 'Comparison of Fact Checking Principles of Misinformation and Disinformation in Social Media in Indonesia Comparison of Fact Checking Principles of Misinformation and

effective regulation, as seen in various countries' approaches to misinformation governance.

This comparison of laws is expected to provide input and enlightenment in determining the direction of social media policy in Indonesia. The purpose of this study is to find out the role of social media in shaping the political views of Generation Z, as well as to find out the rules and comparison of rules regarding freedom of expression on social media, both based on Indonesian legal rules, and their comparison with other countries.

Research Question

Based on the above background, the formulation of the problem raised in this study is:

1. How does social media shape the political views of Generation Z?
2. How is freedom of expression regulated in the era of digital democracy?
3. How do the legal rules in Indonesia and other countries compare regarding freedom of expression on social media?

II. Method

This study uses a normative juridical method to analyze regulations related to the use of social media and the political participation of Generation Z in Indonesia. The approach used is a literature study focusing on primary legal sources such as the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, laws related to elections, and regulations related to electronic interaction. In addition, this research also uses secondary legal sources, including journals, books, and research reports from trusted institutions. Data analysis was carried out with a

deductive qualitative approach, with a theoretical framework related to political participation, generation Z, and digital technology as the basis for data interpretation. The results of this study are expected to identify legal gaps, challenges, and opportunities in the political participation of Generation Z in the digital era, as well as provide comprehensive policy recommendations to improve the quality of digital democracy in Indonesia.

III. DISCUSSION

The Role of Social Media in Shaping Generation Z's Political Views

Social media has become an inseparable part of people's lives, especially in the field of politics in the era of digital democracy. Social media is a platform for the public to seek information and discuss related to politics and elections, as well as a means of expressing opinions related to political issues.¹¹ The presence of social media has increased people's political participation. Freedom of expression on social media not only provides convenience for its users but also makes it easier for politicians to introduce the programs and policies that are launched.

Research shows that 70% of Gen Z are more comfortable interacting through social media.¹² The most widely used

¹¹ Siska Jeanete Saununu and Arief Yanto Rukmana, *The Influence of Social Media Influencers on Generation Z Consumer Behavior in Indonesia*, *West Science Interdisciplinary Studies*, vol. 01, 2023.

¹² Sudaryanto and Ari Subagio, *Consumer Behavior Gen Z* (Jakarta: Ciputra University, 2024).

social media by Gen Z is Instagram, which is 51.9%.¹³ Utilizing Instagram as a means of communication between politicians and the public has been widely used in Indonesia. Instagram is expected to be a forum for communication between politicians and the public.

The penetration of social media into Gen Z's life is not only limited to communication and daily life but also used as a forum for the search for information and political knowledge. Research shows that Gen Z novice voters, especially in Sumatera Utara, have a positive view of the use of voting rights. There is an awareness of the importance of voting rights in the democratic process so that novice voters in Sumatera Utara are committed to participating in the election. This understanding is based on the belief that voting is a right guaranteed by the constitution and is closely related to the future of the nation. The right to vote is considered important as a form of active participation in democracy, which is the foundation for democratic governance. Novice voters believe that voting rights are mandatory for every citizen, both in general elections, both at the national level, and in the election of regional heads and regional legislative representatives.¹⁴

Gen Z also believes that understanding politics is an important component of democratic life. Political information and knowledge can affect voter behavior, policy representation, and the quality of government as a whole. A good understanding can guide the community in determining the candidates to be elected and help assess public officials' accountability.

¹³ Adi Ahdiat, 'Favorite Social Media for Gen Z and Indonesian Millennials', *Databoks*, 2024.

¹⁴ Pusat Kajian Anti Korupsi FH USU, *The Perception of Generation Z First-Time Voters in North Sumatera on Voting Rights and Money Politics for the 2024 Political Year* (Medan, 2024).

In line with this, social media is dominant in providing political information to Gen Z novice voters, especially in Sumatera Utara. Based on the survey results, as many as 98.2% of novice voters rely on social media to get general information, 93% for political information, and 93% to get to know political candidates. In addition to social media, another widely used source of information is online news portals (official websites), where 18.8% of respondents use it for general information, 27.8% for political information, and 26.6% for political candidate information. The third source of information used is podcasts, with a percentage of 8.3% for general information, 13.5% for political information, and 13.5% for candidate information.¹⁵

The data shows that Gen Z in Sumatera Utara also uses social media and other platforms to find in-depth information about the profiles and backgrounds of candidates, both legislative and executive. This critical attitude can be seen in the tendency to verify news from several different sources before accepting it as the truth. These findings underscore that social media plays an important role in shaping political perceptions and information preferences for the younger generation of novice voters in Sumatera Utara.

Furthermore, social media also has a significant influence on the political life of Gen Z, namely:¹⁶ First, social media allows Gen Z to access information quickly and in real time. Second, the massive circulation of political issues on social media indirectly has implications for increasing political awareness and concern among Gen Z. Third, social media

¹⁵ Pusat Kajian Anti Korupsi FH USU. *The Perception of Generation Z First-Time Voters in North Sumatera on Voting Rights and Money Politics for the 2024 Political Year*.

¹⁶ Ayu, 'KaPeu: Political Awareness Strategies for Generation Z through Social Media in the 2024 Elections'.

makes it easier for Gen Z to organize and mobilize political movements. Fourth, social media allows Gen Z to express political views. Fifth. Social media also plays a role in influencing others in digital activities, such as creating online petitions to rally support for various political issues. Sixth, social media allows Gen Z to interact with politicians and political candidates. Seventh, the rapid spread of information on social media aligns with the increasing spread of misinformation and hoaxes.¹⁷

Digital democracy can be interpreted as using technology to increase public involvement in the democratic process through digital media. In addition to these benefits, digital democracy can raise concerns about the potential for spreading misinformation.¹⁸ Misinformation is a term used for false information that is deliberately disseminated to obscure the truth, posing a threat to public security and order.¹⁹ The impact caused by the spread of misinformation can manifest as a loss of public trust in the political system and can also unfairly affect the results of elections.²⁰

¹⁷ T. Putra and Rivaldo, 'Gen Z Political Participation: An Exploration of the Role of Social Media in the Formation of Adolescent Political Awareness', *Journal of Civic and Political Education* 2, no. 1 (2024): 61-68.

¹⁸ Dagmar Fenner, 'Digitalisierung - Revitalisierung Oder Bedrohung Der Demokratie? Reflexionen Zur Demokratischen Qualität Digitaler Öffentlichkeit', *Zeitschrift Für Philosophische Forschung* 78, no. 3 (2024): 385-407, accessed doi:10.3196/004433024839033013.

¹⁹ Prasojo, Muhamad Lukman Arifianto, and Azhar Irfansyah, 'Disinformation As A Contemporary Security Threat: A Literature Review', *Krtha Bhayangkara* 18, no. 1 (30 April 2024): 131-40, accessed doi:10.31599/krtha.v18i1.1637.

²⁰ Thierry Warin, *Disinformation in the Digital Age: Impacts on Democracy and Strategies for Mitigation*, 2024, accessed <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5921-3428>.

Therefore, clear and definite regulations are needed in the use of social media, especially during the election period. Elections are an essential instrument in the democratic process. The use of social media in the democratic process is expected to remain under control and not become a place to spread misinformation that can harm other parties so that the democratic process can run fairly.

This is because, through elections, the people can directly influence state policies and ensure a peaceful and orderly change of power. The active participation of the community in the election also strengthens the legitimacy of the government that has been formed so that the resulting policies are more representative of the aspirations and needs of the people. Thus, politics within the framework of democracy in Indonesia aims to realize welfare, justice, and transparent and accountable governance can be achieved.

Regulation of Freedom of Expression in the Era of Digital Democracy

Freedom of expression is a fundamental human right recognized in many constitutions worldwide, including Indonesia. This right is the basis for forming a democratic and healthy society. In this digital era, the development of the internet and social media has changed how people express their opinions, providing opportunities for the public to be actively involved in discussions and social and political issues. Freedom of expression is more than just expressing opinions; it also serves as the basis for democracy. Freedom of expression enables society to develop ideas and strengthen arguments through open discussion without fear of intimidation or oppression. In today's digital era, this principle is increasingly supported by social media platforms that

provide opportunities for the public to convey ideas and views related to politics.

In simple terms, politics can be interpreted as a way of effort to achieve certain goals, as well as ensuring that the people hold the highest sovereignty of the state, as mandated in Article 1 Paragraph (2) of the Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia of 1945, which explains that: "Sovereignty is in the hands of the people, and is carried out according to the Constitution." In Indonesia, democracy is realized through the mechanism of general elections (elections). Elections allow the people to elect their representatives, both in the legislature and the executive, who then carry out policies based on the mandate given by the people. In other words, democracy gives the people the right to determine the country's political direction through the voice of the people in the democratic party.

Social media has made it easier for humans to express themselves online. Social media has become an effective means of disseminating information among Gen Z, although the accuracy of this information is often not guaranteed.²¹ Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) explains that everyone can express their opinions and expressions. The same thing is also contained in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which affirms that everyone has the right to express their opinions freely and seek, receive, and disseminate information and ideas. Freedom of expression and opinion in life is also

²¹ Purnama, 'Comparison of Fact Checking Principles of Misinformation and Disinformation in Social Media in Indonesia Comparison of Fact Checking Principles of Misinformation and Disinformation in Social Media in Indonesia'.

affirmed in other national legal instruments, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Principles on Freedom of Expression.

Furthermore, freedom of expression in Indonesia is protected in the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia and various laws.²² Article 28E Paragraphs (1), (2), and (3) of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia affirm that everyone is free to think and express their opinions. In addition to expressing opinions, everyone has the right to seek, obtain, own, store, process, and convey information using all available channels. The provision of a quo is reinforced in Article 28F of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, which states that: "Everyone has the right to communicate and obtain information to develop his or her personal and social environment." Over time, there has been a shift in media expression, not only directly but also through social media.²³

Although social media has a significant impact on the dissemination of information, it also increases the dissemination of disinformation. Therefore, clear regulations are needed regarding freedom of expression on social media, especially in the current era of digital democracy. Thus, activities using social media to express themselves in the

²² Tommi Imanuel, Warjio, and Indra Fauzan, 'Analysis of Freedom of Expression in the Digital Age in the Issue of Electronic Information and Transaction Law in Indonesia', *Perspektif* 12, no. 4 (9 October 2023): 1117-26, accessed doi:10.31289/perspektif.v12i4.9875.

²³ Faisal Fadilla Noorikhshan et al., 'Dinamika Internet, Media Sosial, Dan Politik Di Era Kontemporer: Tinjauan Relasi Negara-Masyarakat', *Journal of Political Issues* 5, no. 1 (30 July 2023): 95-109, accessed doi:10.33019/jpi.v5i1.131.

political field must be limited so that they do not violate and cause uproar on social media.

Comparison of Indonesian and Other Countries' Legal Rules Related to Freedom of Expression on Social Media

Each country adopts a different approach to regulating its digital space, including freedom of expression regarding political views on social media. One reason is that each country has a unique history, which shapes its approach to freedom of expression.

The factors that affect the difference in regulation regarding freedom of expression in the digital world include:²⁴ First, the historical background, cultural values, and political system of a country significantly affect the way the state views freedom of expression. For example, countries with authoritarian governments tend to impose stricter regulations to control dissent. Second, countries with a high level of democracy tend to provide a broader space for freedom of expression. Third, threats to national security, terrorism, or political stability can be reasons for restricting freedom of expression. Fourth, the rapid development of information technology requires policymakers to continue to adapt in regulating the digital space. In addition, cultural values also have a very significant role, societies that have a collective

²⁴ Robert Gorwa, 'What Is Platform Governance?', *Information, Communication & Society* 22, no. 6 (2019): 854-71.

culture will tend to limit individual expression to prevent social disharmony.²⁵

Thus, clearer, fairer, and non-discriminatory regulations are needed to balance freedom of expression and the public interest. In Indonesia, there are several relevant legal provisions regarding freedom of expression. As Indonesia's written constitution, the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia has guaranteed freedom of expression. Still, this freedom is also subject to restrictions to protect the public interest and national security.²⁶ Further regulation of freedom of expression in Indonesia's digital world is regulated in Law No. 19 of 2016 concerning Information and Electronic Transactions. This law regulates issues such as defamation and hate speech, emphasizing the importance of responsible use of social media.²⁷

Along with the development and increasing public awareness, the importance of clear and definite regulations in the digital world, the quo law, has become the center of attention in the discourse of freedom of expression on social media. Some articles in the quo law are considered too broad and are often abused to restrict freedom of opinion,²⁸

²⁵ Aris Sarjito, 'From Social Media To The Defense Field: An Exploration Of Gen Z's Role In National Security', *Journal of Governance and Public Administration (JoGaPA)* 1, no. 3 (2024).

²⁶ I Gede et al., 'Freedom of Expression on Social Media in Indonesia: Why Are the Limitations Imposed?' 8, no. 1 (2024): 109–28, accessed <https://oosga.com/social->.

²⁷ Defril Hidayat, Hengki Firmanda, and Mahmud Hibatul Wafi, 'Analysis of Hate Speech in the Perspective of Changes to the Electronic Information and Transaction Law', *Fiat Justisia: Jurnal Ilmu Hukum* 18, no. 1 (30 April 2024): 31–48, accessed doi:10.25041/fiatjustisia.v18no1.3146.

²⁸ Dwilani Irrynta and Nanik Prasetyoningsih, 'An Analysis of Freedom of Speech: Whether the Indonesian Electronic Information

especially regarding democratic and political issues. The criticism that frequently arises is related to: First, some articles are considered too general and can be interpreted too broadly, so they have the potential to be abused. Second, the criminal sanctions listed in the a quo law are considered too severe and disproportionate to the violation of rights committed. Third, the quo law is often used to silence criticism of the government or public officials, which is inversely proportional to the practice in other countries.

Compared to other countries, such as the United States, European countries, or Nordic countries, Indonesia tends to have stricter regulations on freedom of expression on social media. However, Indonesia is still focused on content rather than expression on social media. Developed countries generally do not limit this, and they tend to focus more on better legal protection for their internet users.

For example, national laws such as the General Data Protection Regulation and the Online Safety Bill in the European Union and the United Kingdom.²⁹ GDPR is an EU regulation that has been in effect since 2018. The regulation aims to protect the personal data of EU citizens and give them more control over their data. The GDPR regulates how companies collect, store, and process individuals' data, while the Online Safety Bill aims to make the internet safer, especially for children. The law will require social media platforms to take tougher action against harmful content such as hate speech, online harassment, and exploitative content. However, this differs from the United States; social media platforms cannot be held accountable for user-generated

and Transactions Law Is Contradictory', *SASI* 29, no. 2 (19 April 2023): 200–214, accessed doi:10.47268/sasi.v29i2.1061.

²⁹ Giovanni Sartor, *The Impact of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) on Artificial Intelligence : Study* (European Parliament, 2020).

content. This is contained in Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act (CDA), a law that grants legal immunity to social media platforms. This means that platforms cannot be held responsible for illegal or harmful content as long as they act as a 'platform' and do not 'publish' such content. As a result, social media platforms such as X, Instagram, Meta, and TikTok are adjusting their content moderation practices based on the laws in each country. This has implications for the 'split' in the governance that governs freedom of expression in the world.³⁰

The next question is how far the platform's responsibility is in maintaining freedom of expression, especially in jurisdictions where state regulations are weak. To overcome these regulatory differences, international agreements, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, provide the basis for freedom of expression. However, each country is welcome to interpret and implement it differently.³¹ Based on the above description, it is essential for all stakeholders, including social media platforms and countries, to collaborate in creating clear and definite regulations to protect freedom of expression without ignoring the truth of the issues shared.

IV. Conclusion

³⁰ Gede et al., 'Freedom of Expression on Social Media in Indonesia: Why Are the Limitations Imposed?'

³¹ Amatus Venantius Sabubun and Roberth Kurniawan Ruslak Hammar, 'Protection of Freedom of Expression Through Social Media From The Perspective of Human Rights', *Eduvest-Journal of Universal Studies* 4, no. 3 (2024): 880-87, accessed <http://eduvest.greenvest.co.id>.

Based on the above description, it can be concluded that social media has an essential role in shaping Gen Z's political views in Indonesia. Social media is the primary source of political information and a forum for discussion, expressing opinions, and forming a more critical political awareness. Ease of access to information and freedom of expression have made Gen Z more aware and concerned about political issues. However, the massive dissemination of political information also raises challenges in the form of misinformation that can obscure the truth and affect Gen Z's political views. To maximize the benefits of social media in forming a healthy political view, various parties need to take strategic steps. First, digital literacy must be strengthened, especially in sorting out credible political information. Governments, educational institutions, and social media platforms must work together to reduce the spread of hoaxes and provide accurate and transparent political details. Clear and fair regulations also need to be implemented to prevent the misuse of social media, especially during the election period, without sacrificing freedom of expression. Furthermore, political parties and candidates should take the initiative to publicly communicate their goals and plans on social media to give young voters reliable information.

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