

# **Digital Literacy in Determining Gen Z's Political Choices in the 2024 Election**

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## **Abstract**

Digital literacy brings new meaning to the context of political choice. It is also seen as capable of guiding digital users in using social media. However, the reality is the opposite when it comes to political choice behavior, as voting behavior is complex and diverse in its application. This study aims to determine Gen Z's voting behavior and the factors influencing it using qualitative descriptive research methods. The results indicate that friendships remain the strongest factor in determining Gen Z's political choices in the region studied. The presence of social media is limited to providing information and entertainment for its users.

**Keywords:** Digital Literacy, Gen Z, Political Choice

## **INTRODUCTION**

The digital era can be characterized by rapid technological advancements and the rapid spread of information. The digital era is also often referred to as the mondial era, or global era, which allows people to easily find and access the information they desire. (Budiyono, 2020). According to experts, it is also stated that the digital era exists because of changes in the times, meaning a condition or era where technology can support the success of the dissemination of desired information. (Mirwan, Muhammad, Maritasari, 2016).

Referring to the definition above, the digital era has led people to rely on digital media as a means of communicating and obtaining information, because digital media has a very important function, namely making distances that feel far seem close due to sophisticated technology. (Mirwan, Muhammad, Maritasari, 2016). Digital media in the modern era is technology-based media that delivers content digitally, has fast interactivity and high connectivity. (Naufal, 2021). If we look at the current phenomenon, the digital media in question can be interpreted as popular social media that is often used by the public such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and X.

It is not without reason that these four social media are included as representations of digital media that have high connectivity, fast interactivity and have a wide reach, at least we get the reason that from these four social media the flow of information and exchange of communication can be done quickly and have a wide or global reach.

The rapid development of digital media must be balanced with good digital literacy, digital literacy itself is the ability to understand and use information from various digital sources. Furthermore, Gilster argues that digital literacy is defined as a person's ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate, calculate and use printed and written materials in relation to achieving various goals in developing their knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in community life. (Naufal, 2021).

Digital literacy as explained by Gilster above is perfected by Eshet who said that actually digital literacy is not only focused on the use of digital information sources such as images, writing or audio visuals, Eshet added that digital literacy will also produce a form of a person's way of thinking.(Naufal, 2021)From these descriptions, it's clear that digital media plays a significant role, not only in disseminating information and facilitating communication, but also in shaping a person's mindset or way of thinking.

Given the significant potential of digital media, understanding and learning digital literacy is crucial for Generation Z. A well-understood understanding of digital literacy will undoubtedly protect social media users from misinformation and the spread of hoaxes, which are attempts to sway opinions that deviate from reality.

Generation Z or often referred to by the abbreviation Gen Z is the generation born in 1997-2012 which is also called the iGeneration, namely the net or internet generation, more capable of applying all activities at one time.(Kamil & Laksmi, 2023). Gen Z in this study is one of the main focus of discussion, this is because Gen Z's abilities are considered to have more skills and have a higher and more intense social media usage intensity than other generations. In addition, based on data from APJII (Association of Indonesian Internet Service Providers) recorded from data on internet users in Indonesia across all generations, Gen Z places 34.40% of internet users.(Sukri et al., 2024), and according to a 2024 report from the IDN Research Institute, Gen Z is the largest group in Indonesia, comprising 27.94% of the total population, or 74.93 million people. Gen Z's significance may even be greater than that of millennials, who are the second-largest generation in Indonesia, comprising 25.87% of the total population, or 69.38 million people (komsosmanado.com/Publish May 21, 2024).

In the momentum of the 2024 election, Gen Z votes are being fought over by election candidates in Indonesia. This effort is clearly not something strange considering the potential for quite significant votes and the approach is also relatively simple, utilizing social media as a primary tool in socializing candidates and their programs. Based on data from the General Election Commission, it is estimated that in the 2024 Election, approximately 60% of voters will be from the younger generation, with 22% of them being first-time voters. First-time voters themselves are believed to be mostly from Gen Z, which certainly has a tendency to actively seek information through social media and is spread evenly throughout Indonesia.(Rahmania et al., 2024).

In the context of this research which is focused on one village point, namely Sidomulyo Village, Air Kumbang District, Banyuasin Regency, based on the researcher's initial observations the number of Gen Z in the village is 978 people out of a total village population of 3,838 people, (sidomulyo-airkumbang.desa.id). This number if presented occupies around 26% of the total village population. Seeing the great potential of Gen Z in Sidomulyo Village, it is certainly very unfortunate if in determining their political choices they only follow the crowd or only see interesting content from political candidates so that they do not have quality political choices.

Furthermore, this study focused on Sidomulyo Village because, geographically, it is only approximately 35 km from the center of Palembang, making it relatively uncongested with internet connectivity. Another reason this village is interesting to study is that the majority of Gen Z residents are already familiar with social media as part of their daily interactions.

If we refer to several previous studies, such as research conducted by (Rahmania et al., 2024) shows that improving digital literacy is an important strategy for strengthening critical thinking and intelligent political participation among first-time voters. Furthermore, research conducted by (Farikiansyah et al., 2024) shows that through digital literacy, Civic Education can be a strategic instrument for strengthening the political literacy of millennial youth, thereby supporting inclusive and sustainable democracy. In another study conducted by (Silviah, 2025) shows that public trust plays a role in digital literacy, political participation plays a role in digital literacy, social media plays a role in digital literacy. Other research conducted by (Suwenda & Nyoman Diah Utari Dewi, 2024) which shows that digital literacy increases voter participation through digital-based political literacy, as seen from the indicators of the need for political information, information communication movements, and evaluation of products from the final political process, which are optimal, but the search strategy indicator is not yet fully optimal. Meanwhile, the results of research conducted by (Sukri et al., 2024) This study demonstrates that digital literacy in the community is capable of using social media as a medium for political information. The community participates in distributing and producing positive information related to elections, increasing public participation in elections. Of the several studies reviewed previously, the author has not found any research specifically discussing digital literacy in determining political choices. Previous research tends to discuss critical aspects and increasing political participation through digital literacy.

Therefore, this study aims to determine the behavior of Gen Z in determining their voting rights, whether in determining their political choices they are based on digital literacy so that their political choices are rational and quality or money politics or even just following the crowd, then it will review the factors that influence Gen Z's political choices. So to review more deeply the phenomena that occur and get answers to the author's academic concerns, the title is "Digital Literacy in Determining Political Choices in the 2024 Election (Study of Gen Z Voters in Sidomulyo Village, Banyuasin)".

## **METHOD**

The research method used in this research is field research (Field Research), the purpose of field research as stated by Sugiyono is to conduct direct observation at the research location which is the main object of this research, namely in Sidomulyo Village, Banyuasin, in order to be able to analyze and see the actual situation more closely in more detail and actual. (Suwenda & Nyoman Diah Utari Dewi, 2024). There are at least three reasons why field research was used in this study: first, it makes it easier for researchers to collect data; second, researchers can objectively observe the phenomena leading up to the 2024 elections; and third, researchers can directly observe the behavior and mindset of Gen Z.

Meanwhile, the approach used in this research is a qualitative descriptive approach. Denzin and Lincoln state that qualitative research is research that uses a specific context, with the aim of describing an ongoing phenomenon, using various methods available in qualitative research. (Towards & In, 2025), using data collection techniques through observation, interviews and documentation.

The data analysis technique used in this study is the analysis model proposed by Miles and Huberman, known for its interactive and integrated data analysis model. According to Miles

and Huberman, data analysis must go through at least three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions.(Qomaruddin & Sa'diyah, 2024).

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The modern era is an era where people can easily access the information they need, the modern era is also marked by technological sophistication that can greatly assist human activities. The sophistication of technology and wide-open access to information is a challenge for Gen Z, because with the freedom of access to information presented, it is sometimes beyond expectations or actual reality. Therefore, to overcome this, it is important for Gen Z to understand digital literacy, because if Gen Z understands and uses digital literacy as a guide for social media and to determine their political choices, of course when the General Election is held in Indonesia it will produce quality leaders with quality choice indicators based on the digital literacy possessed by Gen Z.

To analyze the issues described above, researchers used Mass Communication Theory, as proposed by George Garbner in his Cultivation Theory, which states that media plays a major role in shaping society's knowledge of social reality and the surrounding environment. According to Garbner, people who watch with high intensity tend to maintain their conceptions and beliefs in line with what is presented on the media screen. Based on the results of the research conducted, the following results were obtained:

### **1. Gen Z Behavior in Determining Political Choices Through Digital Literacy**

Gen Z is a generation that grew up amidst rapid technological advancements, so it's no surprise that Gen Z is seen as possessing superior skills and expertise in digital usage. However, this digital media savvy and expertise must be tested by the results of their political choices in determining leaders, as Gen Z votes in this modern era are significant in boosting the vote count for political candidates.

The modern era has brought rapid technological advancements, enabling Gen Z to capitalize on these opportunities to fulfill their personal desires. Interview findings indicate that mobile phones have become a daily necessity for Gen Z, facilitating communication. Furthermore, with their sophistication, Gen Z feels that digital media can also be used as a means of entertainment, viewing content that is both political and simply entertaining, as well as educational.

The findings above show that the use of digital media can influence the behavior of its users, the role of social media in shaping Gen Z's political attitudes and actions, highlighting the importance of creative and relevant campaign content in increasing their political participation.(Suryawijaya et al., 2024). The level of political awareness can also be seen to grow through the presence of digital media. By increasingly watching political content, Gen Z can gain a comprehensive understanding before making their choices.

The deep and comprehensive level of understanding that Gen Z has about politics will actually help them in determining political choices, this was found during interviews with Gen Z in local villages who stated that they knew political candidates from political fyp content listed on their social media homepages, meaning that if a candidate massively carries out a political campaign on social media, it is not impossible that their content will be considered successful so that they get sympathy and support from Gen Z.

These results are also in line with the findings of research conducted by Irfansyah et al., which stated that Gen Z not only participates electorally through the use of voting rights at polling stations, but is also active in digital political activities such as online discussions, social media campaigns, and the dissemination of political information.(Syah et al., 2026).

Digital media serves as a reference for Gen Z conversations in Sidomulyo Village. Based on the information above, Gen Z gathers interesting information from each other before gathering to chat. This is an interesting situation, as politics is also a topic of discussion among Gen Z members during their gatherings.

Viral content and engaging political campaigns have indeed successfully penetrated Gen Z in Sidomulyo village, indicating that the media-produced content has successfully implanted a memory in the audience to be presented and discussed with their friends. This means that, in the concept of cultivating an audience, social media has unconsciously exerted influence. On the other hand, the statements above also indicate to the author that despite being active digital media users with high intensity, Gen Z in Sidomulyo village is still relatively passive, as they only view and enjoy the content without interacting or confirming the social media content they see.

This shows that Gen Z's behavior in determining their political choices through digital literacy is still relatively low, this can be seen from Gen Z's behavior of only consuming mass media content passively even though the information is brought into conversations when gathering with friends, but it is all just for jokes or ridicule. This situation is considered by researchers to be quite worrying, because with such behavior, it is possible for Gen Z to be consumed by hoaxes or misinformation. Passivity in using social media by Gen Z can also give rise to skeptical thinking, meaning what they see is what they consume, if from the beginning they see a certain group negatively they will tend to view certain groups will continue to be negative and the message and knowledge are brought into the realm of conversations with their friends when they meet and vice versa.

## **2. Factors Influencing Gen Z's Political Choices**

The presence of digital media in the modern era ideally makes it easier for Gen Z to determine their political choices in a quality manner, a quality political choice according to Burhanuddin Muhtadi. He shows empirically that voters who are considered to be qualified are those who consider more than just identity, but also the personal qualities of the candidates and existing policy alternatives, so it is not just about the attractiveness of the content or irrational sympathy.(Muhtadi, 2018).

In the context of their political choices, Gen Z of Sidomulyo village acknowledged that in the lead-up to the 2024 elections, they saw a great deal of campaign content on social media. They often only saw the excitement without paying attention to the substance, leading Gen Z to conclude that the available content was still merely a means of entertainment. Although still a means of entertainment, the content that frequently appeared could instill memories among Gen Z.

This statement was acknowledged by Gen Z that when they're unsure about their political choices, they rely on what they remember from the content they've watched on social media as a

basis for making their political choices. However, if other factors influence their memories, Gen Z tends to consider them before making a decision.

Another factor considered to influence political choices is the surrounding environment. According to information from Gen Z in Sidomulyo village, environmental factors, friendships, and even volunteer attendance also play a role in determining their choices. Pragmatic attitudes still overshadow the factors determining Gen Z's political choices.

The above statement is quite relevant to previous research findings, which stated that several factors drive Gen Z participation in making choices, including the influence of family and peers, digital political literacy, social media exposure, and self-awareness as citizens. However, the high flow of information in the digital world also presents challenges in the form of misinformation, polarization, and low levels of political understanding. (Syah et al., 2026).

The above statement further strengthens the analysis that campaign content on social media is not solely responsible for determining their political choices. Although it frequently appears on social media feeds, this content is not yet a significant factor in determining their political choices. Friendships play a significant role in determining political choices. This means that friendships, by providing information about the presence of volunteer candidates in the lead-up to the election, can be a key driver in influencing Gen Z's political choices.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the research results that have been described in the previous section, it shows that digital literacy in determining Gen Z's political choices in the 2024 election has not been seen significantly, Gen Z's behavior in using digital media is still very passive and only consumptive so that they have not been able to organize their political choices based on digital literacy. Furthermore, the factors that influence Gen Z's political choices also still tend to be inconsistent, the presence of information from friendly relations with the lure of something is still the peak determinant of their political choices. Suggestions for further research are to conduct more in-depth research regarding the urgency of political education for the progress of the Indonesian nation.

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**Publisher:**

**Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Raden Fatah State Islamic University, Palembang**

*ISSN: 2597-8756 / E-ISSN: 2597-8764*

<https://jurnal.radenfatah.ac.id/index.php/jssp>

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