

POLITICAL VIEWS OF GENERATION Z (CASE STUDY IN THE 2024 REGIONAL HEAD ELECTIONS IN SOUTH KONAWA REGENCY)

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Abstract

This research aims to examine the political views of Generation Z in the context of the 2024 Regional Head Election (Pilkada) in South Konawe Regency. Generation Z, as a group of young voters born between 1997 and 2012, has its own characteristics in terms of political preferences, access to information, and participation in the democratic process. This study employs a qualitative approach, utilizing a case study method, which involves in-depth interviews with a select group of young voters in the area. The research findings indicate that Generation Z in South Konawe has a relatively high political awareness but tends to be skeptical of traditional political actors. Social media is the main source of political information, while issues such as transparency, the integrity of candidates, and concrete work programs are prioritized over regional factors or party affiliation. These findings highlight the need for a new approach in political campaign strategies that are more aligned with Generation Z.

Keywords: Generation Z, Political Views, Regional Elections, South Konawe, Young Voter Participation



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INTRODUCTION

Generation Z, born between 1997 and 2012 (Pew Research Center), is known for its ability to access information easily through digital technology, as well as for holding more critical and open-minded political views (Nafisah & Bakhri, 2024). In the Indonesian context,

particularly in the 2024 general election, Generation Z is predicted to play a significant role in determining the outcome of the regional elections (Pilkada) (Simamora et al., 2024). This phenomenon is worth examining, particularly in regions with distinctive local political dynamics, such as South Konawe Regency. Political developments in previous elections have revealed tensions between regional head candidates from diverse backgrounds, whether from political parties or standing as independents. However, the political views of Generation Z in this region regarding regional head elections remain a relatively understudied area.

It is important for general elections to be held at regular intervals for a number of reasons (Patricia & Yapin, 2019). The views or aspirations of the people regarding various aspects of communal life in society are dynamic and evolve over time (Rikardo, 2020). In addition to public opinion, which changes over time, the conditions of communal life within society may also change due to international dynamics or domestic factors, whether these are internal human factors or external ones. Changes in the aspirations and opinions of the public may also occur as a result of population growth and the coming of age of the population; in particular, new voters do not necessarily share the same views as their parents (Sinaga, 2018). Consequently, the KPU (General Election Commission) was established as an independent body tasked with organising and conducting general elections in Indonesia.

The term 'KPU' has become a familiar one to the Indonesian public since the post-reform era. An electoral management body had in fact already existed in Indonesia; during President Soekarno's era, this body was known as the PPI (Indonesian Election Committee) pursuant to Presidential Decree No. 188 of 1955 concerning the appointment of the PPI (Gobel, 2019). Meanwhile, during the New Order era, when President Suharto was leading Indonesia, the body responsible for organising elections was known as the LPU (General Election Commission) (Febriadi, 2022). This was reinforced by Presidential Decree No. 3 of 1970. Subsequently, following the post-reform era marked by President Suharto's resignation and the appointment of B.J. Habibie the KPU was established in Indonesia (Modami et al., 2024).

Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 7 of 2017 on General Elections (Pemilu), which was promulgated by President Joko Widodo on 15 August 2017, comprises 573 articles, explanatory notes and 4 annexes. This Act stipulates that Indonesian citizens who, on polling day, have reached the age of 17 (seventeen) years or older, are married, or have previously been married, have the right to vote. Such Indonesian citizens shall be registered once by the Election Organiser in the Voters' Register. Indonesian citizens whose political rights have been revoked by a court do not have the right to vote. To be able to exercise their right to vote, residents of South Konawe Regency one of the regencies in Indonesia will take part in the 2024 simultaneous regional elections during the 2024 South Konawe Regency Regional Elections.

The 2024 general election marks a crucial moment for the strengthening of democracy in South Konawe Regency (Konsel). According to figures released by the South Konawe Regency General Election Commission (KPU), 218,943 citizens are included in the Final Voters' List (DPT) for the 2024 general election. Of this total, more than half are young voters, namely Generation Z and millennials. According to the Commissioner of the KPU Konsel's Data and Information Planning Division, 70,992 voters (32.42%) are millennials, defined as those born between 1983 and 1998. Meanwhile, Generation Z voters comprising those born between 1998 and 2008 numbered 52,208 (23.85%). These figures indicate that nearly 56.27% of voters in Konsel are young people, making them a strategic group in shaping the direction of regional and national politics. Generation Z, born between 1997 and 2012, marks a new era in political dynamics. Their political views differ significantly from those of previous generations, giving rise to a number of underlying issues that need to be understood (Syahputri & Katimin, 2024). Generation Z has grown up amidst rapid global change, such as economic crises, technological advancements and pressing environmental issues. This has shaped their perspective on politics and their role within it (Fitriyani et al., 2024). Generation Z is

well-versed in social media and digital technology, so they access political information and engage with the political system via digital platforms (Kadir, 2022). This has created a new dynamic in communication and political participation. Generation Z tends to be more active in expressing their views and getting involved in social movements, such as environmental issues and gender equality. Their activism reflects their concern for social issues and their desire to bring about change (Tinambunan et al., 2024).

Generation Z may have little trust in traditional political institutions such as political parties and the government, as they have witnessed the injustices and corruption that occur. This mistrust drives them to seek alternatives in politics. Generation Z faces major challenges in the future, such as climate change, economic inequality and threats to democracy (Kurniawaty & Widayatmo, 2024). This encourages them to take a greater interest in politics and to get involved in finding solutions to these issues. Understanding the background to these issues is essential for building a political system that is better suited to the needs of Generation Z. Knowledge of their political perspectives will help in formulating policies and political strategies that can engage them more effectively (Adam et al., 2023). When it comes to the level of awareness among Generation Z in South Konawe Regency regarding the 2024 general election, what is ultimately most needed is for Generation Z to develop a sound and prudent understanding of participation in the general election, so that they can exercise their right to vote properly and correctly in accordance with the provisions of Law No. 7 of 2017.

Based on the background outlined above, several fundamental issues have emerged that require further study. The first issue is the political views of Generation Z in South Konawe Regency regarding the conduct of the 2024 regional elections, encompassing their level of awareness, understanding, attitudes and orientation towards this local democratic process. The second issue is: what are the key factors influencing the formation of political views and shaping Generation Z's considerations when making their choices in the 2024 regional elections, whether these stem from internal environments such as family and education, or external factors such as social media, public figures, and the socio-political reality in their local area. Based on this research question, this study has two main objectives. The first objective is to analyse and describe the political views of Generation Z in South Konawe Regency regarding the 2024 regional elections, including their level of awareness, attitudes, understanding and forms of engagement in this political process. The second objective is to identify and analyse the determining factors that influence the formation of political views and decision-making among Generation Z, including both internal factors such as educational background and organisational experience and external factors such as the influence of the family environment, the role of social media, and local socio-cultural dynamics in South Konawe.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Political Views of Generation Z

Political views are defined as a set of values, beliefs, attitudes and emotional perceptions that individuals hold regarding the political system, authority, public policy and their role in the governance of the state (Touseef et al., 2023). More than just a passing opinion, political views are the result of a long and complex process of political socialisation, influenced by various formal agents (such as schools and the state) and informal agents (such as family, peers and the media) (Karolčík et al., 2025). It serves as a reflection of civic consciousness and is an integral component of a society's political culture, as stated by Landig & Landig (2024), which illustrates how citizens interpret the political system and assess their own position within it (Lai & Beh, 2025). In the contemporary context, the process of its formation has become increasingly dynamic and is influenced by the flow of digital information, personal experiences and interactions in the virtual realm; as a result, it is constantly evolving and not static (Irwanto et al., 2025). This concept is important for understanding how different generations, including

Generation Z, assess and engage with political life, with forms of expression ranging from support and criticism to apathy (Alfaruqy et al., 2022).

Generation Z's political views are shaped by several key factors, namely political socialisation (both formal, through education, and informal, through the family and the digital environment), intensive exposure to digital information, and direct experience with public policy (Suhariyanto & Rozak, 2025; Utomo et al., 2026). Its constituent elements include knowledge, values, beliefs and emotional attitudes towards the political system, as outlined by Budiana et al (2023) and Abadi et al (2022) as a component of political culture. The key characteristics of this generation in the political sphere include digital literacy, scepticism towards the traditional political system, a focus on social and environmental issues, and sporadic, issue-based participation (Anter et al., 2025). The forms of their views and participation vary widely, ranging from active support and a critical-evaluative stance to apathy, which is often expressed through digital activism, online campaigns and support for social movements, rather than through conventional forms of participation such as membership of political parties (Nugroho, 2025; Sugiyono et al., 2024). Indicators of this political orientation can be observed in levels of trust in formal institutions, patterns of consumption and production of political information on social media, and the types of issues prioritised for advocacy (Peng et al., 2025). Notable related issues include vulnerability to disinformation in the digital sphere, growing mistrust stemming from corruption and a lack of political transparency, and a shift from conventional political participation towards more fluid, digital and networked forms of participation (Lim, 2024; Sipos, 2025).

Political Participation in General Elections and Local Elections

Political participation is one of the key indicators for measuring the quality of a country's democracy. In this context, general elections and local elections serve as the primary formal channels enabling citizens, including Generation Z, to exercise their right to vote directly in determining the direction of political leadership (Lestari et al., 2025; Wantu & Djaafar, 2024). For Generation Z, who have been of voting age since the 2019 general election and will become the dominant voter group in future elections, political participation does not always take traditional forms (Hemastuti et al., 2025; Saragih et al., 2026). Although they have access to political information and public issues via social media, not all of them are automatically actively involved in the voting process (Hassan et al., 2021). Several studies suggest that Generation Z tends to have a high level of political awareness, but this is not always reflected in their participation in general or local elections. A sceptical attitude towards the political elite, a lack of representation of their aspirations within political parties, and a distrust of formal political processes often act as psychological and ideological barriers that reduce electoral participation.

Generation Z, who use their right to vote as a form of political expression, as a manifestation of their civic responsibility, and as a means of bringing about broader social change (Akbar & Yunus, 2025). They have begun to view elections not merely as a five-yearly ritual, but as a platform for supporting candidates who represent the values they champion, such as anti-corruption, social justice, environmental protection and human rights (Hofi, 2024). Generation Z's involvement in local elections also reveals a unique dynamic. At the local level, their close connection to everyday issues such as education, transport and public services makes them more responsive to local leaders who are seen as being 'close' to the people (Saputro et al., 2024). The low level of political literacy among some members of Generation Z means they are easily swayed by populist campaigns or those based purely on image (Yanto & Sari, 2025). Thus, although Generation Z has great potential as active voters, successfully encouraging their participation in general and local elections requires an approach that is communicative, inclusive and grounded in values relevant to their lives. Political

education that is creatively packaged, participatory and digital media-based is key to meaningfully increasing their engagement in the electoral democratic process.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research employs a qualitative approach using a case study design to gain an in depth understanding of the political views of Generation Z in South Konawe Regency in the context of the 2024 regional elections. This approach was chosen because it enables the exploration of the factors influencing their political views and behaviour through narrative and descriptive data, thereby allowing the researcher to identify relevant meanings, patterns and social contexts (Sugiyono, 2020). Qualitative approaches focus on processes, interactions and the lived experiences of research subjects, making them highly relevant for examining complex socio-political phenomena. This study seeks to understand social reality through the interpretation of subjective data obtained from the informants' perspectives, specifically how their political views are formed and the role of the socio-cultural environment in shaping political attitudes and behaviour.

The study involved nine key informants from Generation Z (aged 17–26) residing in South Konawe Regency, with diverse educational backgrounds, professions and levels of political participation, ranging from students active in organisations and active social media users to election volunteers. Data collection was conducted using a triangulation approach, combining primary data (semi-structured in-depth interviews) and secondary data (Election Commission documents, local news, social media posts, and academic literature). In addition to interviews, the researchers also observed political activity on social media (such as Instagram and TikTok) and in offline discussion forums, and conducted a documentary study of relevant written sources. Data analysis was carried out interactively and continuously following the model (Miles & Huberman, 2009), which includes data reduction, data presentation and drawing conclusions until data saturation is reached. This study was conducted in South Konawe Regency, Southeast Sulawesi Province, which was selected because it has a significant Generation Z population and is one of the locations for the 2024 regional elections.

RESULTS

Generation Z's Political Views on the 2024 Local Elections in South Konawe Regency

The political views of Generation Z in South Konawe Regency regarding the 2024 regional elections reveal a diverse range of dynamics. The majority of them have demonstrated a budding political awareness, albeit to varying degrees and with differing motivations. This generation has grown up in a fast-paced digital age, meaning that the formation of their political opinions is heavily influenced by access to online information, particularly via social media. Some informants stated that they view the Regional Elections as a crucial moment in shaping the region's future, particularly regarding development, education, and public welfare. They recognise that the elected regional head will play a strategic role in managing public policy. However, on the other hand, there are also informants who admit to being less interested or even not following the developments of the Regional Elections, as they lack trust in the candidates or view politics as something corrupt and rife with vested interests.

These diverse political views reveal an ambivalence in Gen Z's political awareness. Those who are politically active tend to seek information via social media and discuss issues with their peers, whilst those who are passive typically lack sufficient political information or feel they have no influence in the electoral process. The majority of respondents also associate political choices with the candidates themselves, rather than with their programmes or vision and mission. They admit to voting based on popularity, social media image, or family recommendations. This indicates that a political approach centred on personal branding and digital communication has a significant influence on this generation's political preferences.

These findings are consistent with voter behaviour theory, which suggests that affective, cognitive and social environmental factors influence an individual's political orientation. In the context of Generation Z, the use of social media as a source of political information and a digital discussion forum serves as the primary means of shaping their views. Consequently, it can be concluded that Generation Z's political views regarding the 2024 local elections in South Konawe Regency are pluralistic and influenced by their trust in the political system, the quality of the information they receive, and the patterns of political communication developing within their environment (Silvia, 2024).

The interview results indicate that Generation Z has an increasingly rational view of politics. The majority of respondents base their choice on a candidate's track record, personal credibility, and their connection with the community. For example, they believe that a candidate for local government should "engage directly with the community, not just turn up during the campaign." Meanwhile, Melan and Sasa emphasised the importance of integrity and transparency in leadership. Ikmal and Risan added that candidates' engagement on social media also influences the image and perceptions of young voters. This indicates that Generation Z does not merely judge figures by their surface appearance, but assesses the substance of the vision and work programmes on offer. The results of interviews conducted with nine informants representing Generation Z revealed that the majority of them recognise the importance of the regional elections as a strategic moment in determining the direction of regional development.

Informants such as Yesinta and Melan stated that they felt the local elections were no longer just a matter for their parents, but had become the responsibility of the younger generation to help decide who would lead and bring about change in their region. They realise that their votes can be part of the solution to various local problems. However, not all informants showed the same enthusiasm. Sasa and Iin, for example, admitted that they remain neutral and are not entirely convinced that their single vote will have a significant impact. They acknowledge that some members of Generation Z remain sceptical and feel disillusioned by unfulfilled political promises. Nevertheless, it can generally be concluded that there is a growing trend of political awareness among Generation Z in South Konawe. However, this has not yet fully manifested itself in the form of active participation.

Factors Influencing Generation Z's Political Views in Making Political Choices

When making their political choices in the 2024 regional elections, Generation Z in South Konawe Regency are influenced by a number of factors, both internal and external. Internal factors include personal values, social experiences and the political education they have received, whilst external factors encompass the influence of social media, their social circles, family, and their perceptions of the candidates for regional head. Risan and Ikmal, for example, emphasise that a candidate's track record, vision and mission, and ability to articulate their ideas are key factors in determining their choice. They tend to avoid making choices based solely on popularity or group loyalty.

Meanwhile, Yesinta and Dinda revealed that they are heavily influenced by content on social media, particularly from influencers who present political information in a light-hearted and easily digestible manner. The influence of family and peers cannot be overlooked either. Susi and Selvi stated that discussions with parents and friends on campus had been very helpful in shaping their political views. This suggests that the political decision-making process amongst Generation Z is interactive and involves careful consideration, rather than being purely impulsive or emotional.

The Influence of Social Media on Generation Z's Political Views and Participation

Social media plays a key role in shaping the views and encouraging political participation of Generation Z. Platforms such as TikTok, Instagram and YouTube have become a primary source for them to access political information. Compared to conventional media, social media is considered to be faster, more interactive and capable of presenting political narratives in a more engaging format. Social media has become the dominant medium in shaping the political views of Generation Z. All informants acknowledged that social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram and YouTube are the primary sources of political information, including campaign activities, candidate debates and statements of vision and mission. Yesi and Selvi said that they had learnt about the local election candidates through content shared on social media.

Meanwhile, Ikmal admitted that he feels more connected to candidates who actively host live streams or interact directly with the public via social media. This suggests that social media serves not only as a source of information, but also as a tool for building emotional closeness and political trust. Through social media, Generation Z are not only consumers of information, but also opinion-makers. For example, Ikmal says he actively participates in discussions in the comments section and follows politically neutral accounts. Dinda explains that she first became interested in politics because she often saw educational content and positive campaigning from local election candidates on Instagram. Risan added that the debates between candidates, which were re-aired on social media, were more engaging than the live broadcasts on television. However, the impact of social media is not entirely positive. Sasa and Iin highlighted the risk of disinformation spreading on a massive scale, particularly in the run-up to the campaign period. A lack of digital literacy among some young people leaves them vulnerable to hoaxes and political propaganda. This shows that social media can be a double-edged sword, capable of broadening horizons whilst also causing confusion if not used wisely.

Barriers Faced by Generation Z in Participating in the Local Elections in South Konawe Regency

Generation Z shows great potential as future political actors, yet they face various obstacles to actively participating in local elections. These obstacles include structural, informational, psychological and administrative barriers. Structurally, several informants, such as Selvi and Susi, complained about the lack of equitable access to information regarding the electoral process, including how first-time voters can exercise their right to vote. Administrative obstacles, such as not yet having an electronic ID card, were also cited as reasons why some young people were unable to vote. In terms of information, Iin and Sasa stated that a lack of political education, both at school and within the community, was a major obstacle to understanding local political issues. Psychological barriers such as the fear of making the wrong choice, apathy, and distrust of the political system were also mentioned by several informants, such as Risan and Sasa, who felt that change was difficult to achieve even though they had voted. On the other hand, cultural barriers remain evident. Dinda explained that in some families, political choices are still heavily influenced by tradition or parental pressure, thereby limiting the scope for free choice.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study are consistent with the theory proposed by Filda et al. (2024), which categorises participation along a spectrum ranging from apathy to spectator to activist. The majority of Generation Z in South Konawe remain at the spectator level, meaning they only participate in elections to a minimal extent (for example, by casting a vote), but have not yet become actively involved in the broader democratic process. From the perspective of information consumption, these findings also support the theory of digital political communication that social media has replaced the role of traditional media in shaping the political opinions of young people. However, low levels of digital literacy leave Generation Z

vulnerable to disinformation and political manipulation. In the local context, the characteristics of South Konawe society which still places great value on political patronage and the influence of community leaders also shape the political views and decisions of Generation Z. In many cases, political choices are still influenced by family or the community, rather than by rational considerations. Consequently, a new approach is needed to educate young voters so that they become more aware and critical of the ongoing democratic process, particularly at the local level.

The political views of Generation Z in South Konawe Regency reveal an interesting dynamic amidst the development of local democracy and the digitalisation of information. This generation comprises young people born between 1997 and 2012, who are now reaching voting age. In the context of the 2024 Regional Head Elections (Pilkada), their presence is set to be a key factor in the electoral process, given their significant numbers and strategic role in long-term development.

Based on the results of interviews and observations, it was found that the majority of Generation Z are aware of the importance of participating in elections. However, this level of participation is not entirely accompanied by a deep understanding of the political system, the vision and mission of local government candidates, or the mechanisms governing the conduct of the elections themselves. Many of them are aware of the local elections, but have not yet become fully involved in political discussions or in voting rationally based on the candidates' track records (Bakhtiar et al., 2024). This is influenced by several factors, including low political literacy, a lack of political engagement initiatives targeting the younger generation, and the influence of social media, which tends to prioritise entertainment over educational political content. On the other hand, a small proportion of Generation Z who are active in school, university or local community organisations show greater interest in local political issues and tend to take a critical stance towards policies and local leadership candidates.

Generation Z's political views on the 2024 local elections in South Konawe Regency reveal complex dynamics. The results of interviews and qualitative data collection with a number of informants from Generation Z indicate that this group cannot be categorised as either entirely apathetic or entirely active, but rather demonstrates variation in understanding, attitudes and political engagement. Generally speaking, a significant proportion of Gen Z demonstrate a fairly high level of political awareness. They view local elections as a crucial opportunity to shape the direction of regional policy and development. Informants in this category express an interest in local political issues such as infrastructure, education, healthcare and leadership transparency.

They follow political developments via social media, read political news online, and even take part in discussions on campus or within their communities. However, quite a few informants also expressed apathy towards the local elections. They admitted they did not really care who was elected, as they felt that politics had no direct impact on their daily lives. Some expressed disappointment at unfulfilled political promises or held negative perceptions of political practices deemed to be self-serving and manipulative. Such views reinforce the finding that some members of Generation Z have low levels of trust in political institutions, particularly at the local level. Interestingly, many respondents also expressed an interest in the 'personal' aspects of prospective regional leaders, such as their communication style, leadership style, and the public image they project through social media. Generation Z tends to prefer leaders who are seen as 'close to the people', open, and proactive in engaging with the public both in person and online. This suggests that social media-based campaigns and two-way communication are key to shaping the political views of the younger generation.

Several informants stated that they had not received sufficient information about the candidates and the regional election process itself. The lack of outreach from both the organisers and the candidates themselves has led to a passive attitude and a lack of awareness. In this context, Gen Z demands that political information be presented not only in a formal and

bureaucratic manner, but also in a creative, concise and engaging way for example, through short videos, educational content on TikTok, or infographics on Instagram. Based on the results of the thematic analysis, it can be concluded that Generation Z's political views regarding the 2024 local elections in South Konawe Regency are significantly influenced by their level of political literacy, access to information, the candidates' communication strategies, and their perceptions of the effectiveness of local politics.

This group tends to make their choices based on personal assessments of candidates rather than on loyalty to a particular political party. This marks a shift in the political orientation of young voters from ideological to pragmatic. This finding is consistent with the theory of political behaviour put forward by Ramlan Surbakti, which holds that political behaviour is influenced by factors such as political information, trust in the system, and personal experience. In the case of Gen Z, access to digital information and the dynamics of social media are key factors in shaping their political views. Any political communication strategy targeting Gen Z must take into account their characteristics as a digitally savvy generation that values honesty and transparency, and is critical of conventional political symbols.

Factors Influencing Generation Z's Political Views

This study identified several key factors influencing the political views of Generation Z in South Konawe Regency:

1. Education and Access to Information

Members of Generation Z who have received higher education tend to hold more critical and balanced political views. Greater access to political information via the internet and social media has a significant influence on how they assess leaders (Yanti et al., 2024). Education and access to information play a vital role in shaping the political views of Generation Z, particularly in the context of the 2024 local elections in South Konawe Regency. Members of Generation Z who have received higher education generally possess more developed critical thinking skills and do not simply accept information or political appeals without first assessing them. Formal education, particularly at university level, not only imparts theoretical knowledge but also equips students with analytical thinking skills, the ability to distinguish between facts and opinions, and the ability to evaluate political issues objectively.

Educational institutions also frequently serve as venues for open discussion, bringing together a variety of perspectives and ideologies. Through forums such as seminars, campus debates, student organisations, and even specific lectures on politics and governance, Gen Z gains a deeper understanding of the importance of participation in democracy. They not only recognise the concept of politics as a contest for power, but also understand the functions of government, citizens' rights, and the role of voters in ensuring leaders are held to account. Technological advances and widespread internet access have made Generation Z a group that is highly connected to information. Social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Twitter and YouTube have become their primary sources of political information.

Through this platform, they can keep up with the latest political news, watch candidate debates, or even engage in direct discussions with political figures. The information they consume is not limited to mainstream media, but also comes from independent content creators, activists and election monitoring organisations. The challenge lies in the ability to distinguish valid and accurate information. Many members of Generation Z are exposed to hoaxes, disinformation or political propaganda on social media. Education therefore plays a vital role in fostering digital and political literacy, so that they can become informed voters who are not easily swayed by misleading narratives. In the context of the local elections in South Konawe, interviews with respondents indicate that young people who are currently in education or university graduates tend to have a higher level of political awareness. They are not only aware of who the candidates are, but also actively seek to find out about the vision, mission, background and policy platforms of each candidate. Most stated that they did not wish

to make their choice based on emotional attachment or peer pressure, but rather on rational considerations and information they had gathered independently.

2. Family and Social Environment

Political views are also shaped by the values that develop within families and social communities. In some cases, Generation Z's political choices are still influenced by those of their parents or local community leaders (Bagaskoro, 2024). The family and social environment have a significant influence on the formation of Generation Z's political views. As the first social unit an individual encounters, the family plays a role in instilling fundamental values about life, including those relating to politics, civic responsibility, and preferences for particular political figures or parties. In many cases, members of Generation Z who still live with their parents or within a close-knit family structure tend to take their parents' political views as their initial point of reference. This is particularly true in areas where social ties remain very close-knit, such as South Konawe Regency, where the views of family members or community leaders carry significant weight in determining voting choices.

Casual conversations and discussions about politics often take place within the family, whether directly or indirectly. For example, when parents comment on the national political situation, discuss candidates in local elections, or express their hopes for local leaders. Without realising it, this serves as an early source of political education that shapes their children's political attitudes. Consequently, political leanings within the family, including loyalty to a particular party or figure, are often passed on indirectly to children who have not yet developed a mature understanding of politics. In addition to the family, social circles such as peers, community leaders, teachers and religious figures also influence Gen Z's political outlook. In South Konawe, several informants mentioned that they became interested in politics after hearing stories or appeals from community leaders or taking part in activities related to the elections. The presence of charismatic local figures is also often a decisive factor in the political choices of the younger generation, particularly if those figures have an emotional connection or close social ties with their community.

Family and social influences are very strong; Generation Z tends to show a tendency towards greater independence in their thinking, particularly those who already have access to a wider range of information via social media and the internet. Some respondents emphasised that although their parents supported a particular candidate, they made their choice based on their own judgement after comparing the candidates' visions and missions. Thus, although family and social influences remain fundamental to the formation of Gen Z's political views, a tendency towards critical thinking and the independent evaluation of choices is beginning to emerge, particularly among young people who are educated and actively follow political developments.

3. The Role of Social Media

Social media has become the dominant platform through which Generation Z obtains political information, but it also carries the risk of spreading disinformation. Digital campaigns run by local election candidates have a significant influence on their perceptions. Social media plays a vital role in shaping Generation Z's political views, as it is their primary source for accessing information and forming opinions. Generation Z, having grown up in the digital age, is more likely to get their political news from platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, X (Twitter) and YouTube than from traditional media. Through social media, they can follow political developments in real time, listen to public debates and even see candidates' activities first-hand. Furthermore, social media also serves as a space for dialogue and self-expression, where Gen Z can voice their political views, discuss issues with their peers, or even get involved in digital campaigns.

Whilst providing easy access and broadening political participation, social media also presents its own challenges. The rapid spread of information is not always accompanied by accuracy, thereby risking the formation of opinions based on hoaxes or incomplete

information. On the other hand, the presence of influencers or young figures who actively discuss political issues on social media has proven capable of influencing Generation Z's interest in and engagement with the political world. In other words, social media serves not only as a channel for information, but also as a space for political education and the active, participatory formation of Generation Z's political identity.

4. Personal Experience and Organisational Activities

Those who are active in organisations, whether in educational settings or youth communities, tend to have a better understanding of the role of voters in the democratic process. Personal experience and involvement in organisations are key factors shaping Generation Z's political views. Those who are active in organisational activities whether within schools, universities or youth communities tend to have a deeper understanding of democratic processes, political rights and the importance of participating in elections. Organisational activities such as the Student Council (OSIS), the Student Executive Board (BEM), on-campus and off-campus organisations, as well as socio-political communities outside the education sector, provide a training ground for Generation Z to interact, discuss and make decisions collectively. This indirectly shapes their political awareness and fosters sensitivity to public issues.

Through their involvement in organisations, Gen Z learn about leadership mechanisms, decision-making structures, and the importance of consultation and consensus concepts that are highly relevant to political practice. They also become accustomed to engaging with diverse perspectives and are trained in managing conflict or differences of opinion, which are essential skills in political life. These experiences foster a critical mindset towards social and governmental dynamics. This generation is also beginning to develop the courage to voice their opinions openly, whether through organisational forums or social media. Those who have taken part in youth training or specific advocacy activities are also more exposed to public policy issues, such as education, the environment and the rights of vulnerable groups.

This active participation serves as a key foundation for developing a more rational and informed political outlook, compared to those who are passive or lack such experience. In South Konawe Regency, interview findings indicate that student respondents who are active in organisations are more aware of their role as voters and show greater interest in the 2024 regional elections. They tend not only to view candidates in terms of their popularity or familiarity, but also to assess them on the basis of their policy platforms and track records. This suggests that experience in organisational activities makes a tangible contribution to shaping Gen Z's political awareness and the quality of their participation in elections.

Participation Rates and Barriers

Political participation among Generation Z in South Konawe Regency in the 2024 regional elections remains somewhat volatile. Although the majority state they intend to exercise their right to vote, the motivation behind this participation is still dominated by emotional considerations or social pressure such as the influence of family and the wider community rather than a rational analysis of the candidates' vision, mission and capabilities. Several structural barriers identified have also influenced these dynamics. Firstly, there is a lack of interactive and educational political outreach activities, meaning that the information received by young people is often one-sided and does not foster critical thinking. Secondly, the involvement of young people in the policy-making process at the local level remains very limited, leading to a sense of alienation and a lack of ownership of the democratic process. Thirdly, low levels of trust in the integrity of the electoral process constitute a significant barrier, generally caused by past negative experiences such as vote-buying or unfulfilled campaign promises from previous terms.

Strategies for Raising Political Awareness Among Generation Z

Political awareness is one of the key indicators for assessing the quality of a nation's democracy, including in the context of local elections. Generation Z, as young voters who

make up the majority of the new electorate, play a strategic role in shaping the direction of both local and national politics. Political awareness is one of the key indicators for assessing the quality of a nation's democracy, including in the context of local elections. Generation Z, as young voters who make up the majority of the new electorate, play a strategic role in shaping the direction of both local and national politics. To address this issue, relevant and context-specific strategies are required to raise political awareness among Generation Z, particularly in areas such as South Konawe Regency, which is the focus of this study. These strategies can be developed across several key areas, namely: political education, the use of digital technology, cultural approaches, and direct involvement in the democratic process.

1. Political education is a key means of fostering rational and critical political awareness. This strategy must be implemented not only through formal channels such as Civic Education lessons in schools or citizenship courses at universities, but also through informal channels such as seminars, community discussions, political podcasts and educational content on social media. The content of political education should focus on an understanding of political rights, the electoral process, the role of political parties, and the importance of the individual's voice in a democratic system. This education must also adopt a participatory and dialogue-based approach, in which Generation Z are not merely the recipients of education, but are also actively involved as participants who discuss, express their views and evaluate the political situation in their communities. When they feel directly involved, their political awareness will develop more naturally and deeply.
2. As a generation that has grown up in the digital age, Gen Z is very familiar with various social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube and Twitter. Therefore, strategies to raise political awareness must also be implemented through these channels. Political information presented in a visual, light-hearted and entertaining manner is more readily accepted by Gen Z than rigid and formal presentations. Local authorities, the General Elections Commission, the Elections Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu), educational institutions and local communities must be able to produce political content that is both educational and engaging, such as short videos on how to cast a vote, the importance of political participation, or brief profiles of local government candidates. Indeed, the use of memes, animations and interactive digital campaigns can be a creative way of conveying political messages to Generation Z.
3. The next strategy involves empowering youth communities and organisations comprising members of Generation Z, such as the Student Council, the Student Executive Board (BEM), youth groups, literacy communities, or other student organisations. By involving them directly in social and political activities, political awareness can be fostered through first-hand experience on the ground. Activities such as leadership training, mock elections, youth forums, meetings with public officials, and participation in local development planning forums (musrenbang) can foster a sense of political responsibility and encourage engagement in the decision-making process.
4. One of the reasons for the low level of political awareness among Generation Z is the lack of accurate, easily accessible and relevant information. Local authorities and electoral bodies therefore need to improve the transparency of political information, for example by presenting data on local government candidates, their visions and missions, and campaign schedules in an open and interactive manner. This information should be made available through various channels that are easily accessible to young people. Furthermore, 'open politics' approaches such as live-streamed candidate debates, public dialogues, or interactive Q&As on social media can foster engagement among Gen Z and dispel the perception that politics is something elitist or detached from their lives.
5. Another equally important strategy is to engage political influencers or young local figures who have credibility and influence on social media. These figures can act as a bridge between the political world and the younger generation by communicating political issues

in language that is easy to understand and not patronising. This role is crucial in shaping public opinion and fostering Gen Z's interest in keeping up with political developments.

Overall, raising political awareness among Generation Z cannot be achieved through a one-way or purely formal approach. A comprehensive strategy is required one that is adaptable to technological developments and participatory in nature. This generation is not only the voters of the future, but also today's voters who have the right to understand and shape the political direction of their local communities. Therefore, fostering political awareness among Gen Z is a vital investment in achieving a healthy and sustainable democracy.

CONCLUSION

One of the most significant yet concerning findings of this study is that the political participation of the majority of Generation Z in South Konawe in the 2024 regional elections turned out to be illusory or superficial. Although statistically they are present in the polling booth (as 'spectators', according to Milbrath and Goel), their participation is not grounded in a rational and independent political understanding, but remains highly susceptible to being merely an extension of traditional political patronage or the result of unfiltered exposure to digital information. Ironically, this generation which is considered the most digitally literate and critical has, in the local context, demonstrated that social media, their primary source of information, has not yet been able to fully break the cycle of dependence on the political decisions of family members and community leaders. This finding serves as a sobering reminder that digitalisation, if not accompanied by a massive increase in political literacy, risks perpetuating the old political culture in a new guise, where young voters are technically active but intellectually passive. Therefore, the solution no longer lies simply in providing access to information, but in urgent efforts to build Generation Z's critical capacity to filter information, contextualise national issues within local conditions, and empower them to become autonomous political agents, rather than merely inheritors of their environment's political preferences.

The findings of this study make a significant contribution to the academic development of Political Science and Political Communication, particularly in understanding the political behaviour of the younger generation in the digital age. This study enriches approaches to the study of democracy by offering a contextual analysis focused on the local political landscape, demonstrating that theories of political behaviour need to take into account both spatial (local) and generational dimensions simultaneously. From a theoretical perspective, the findings of this study both confirm and refine Milbrath and Goel's theory of political participation and the theory of digital political communication by demonstrating that the majority of Generation Z in the study area act as 'digital spectators', actively consuming information on social media but remaining passive in conventional forms of participation. This study also introduces the concept of the 'digital spectator' and identifies distinctive new variables, such as social media-based campaign patterns and the influence of local patronage in moderating young people's scepticism towards politics. Furthermore, this study raises new critical questions for further research, such as: How can effective mechanisms for political education be designed to bridge the gap between digital literacy and critical political literacy in regional areas? Is Generation Z's sporadic, issue-based model of participation a new form of democracy or a threat to the stability of the representative system? Furthermore, how does the tension between the cultural influence of local patronage and digital individualism shape the political identity of young voters in regional areas? As such, this study not only provides an initial overview of Generation Z's political behaviour in regional areas, but also opens up a relevant research agenda for strengthening democracy amidst digital disruption and socio-generational change.

Although this study has provided an initial insight into the political views of Generation Z in South Konawe Regency, there are several limitations that require further research to gain a more comprehensive understanding. The limitation of this study lies in its geographical scope,

which is restricted to a single district; consequently, the findings cannot necessarily be generalised to represent Generation Z across Indonesia or in regions with different socio-cultural characteristics. From a conceptual perspective, this study still relies on the conventional theoretical framework of political participation and political culture, which may not fully capture the complexity and new nuances of Generation Z's digital activism. The methodological limitations of this qualitative approach, with its limited sample size (9 informants), also leave scope for further research using a mixed-methods approach that combines quantitative surveys to measure broader trends with in-depth qualitative exploration. Furthermore, this study has not yet fully explored specific variables such as the influence of social media algorithms, the role of local political influencers, or the impact of citizenship education programmes in schools on political literacy. Further research is therefore recommended to broaden the geographical scope and sample size, develop a theoretical framework that is better suited to the digital age, and examine in greater depth the mechanisms by which factors such as disinformation, patterns of political communication on specific platforms (such as TikTok), and the interplay between local cultural loyalty and global political identity shape the political attitudes and behaviour of Generation Z.

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