



# Enhancing Political Participation through Civic Education: Integrating Digital and Social Media for Peaceful Elections among Generation Z in Indonesia

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – This study investigates the role of civic education in shaping political participation among Generation Z in Indonesia, particularly in the context of peaceful elections. It aims to address the gap in understanding how the integration of digital and social media within civic education can empower young voters to engage constructively in the democratic process.

**Methods/Design/Approach** – The study employs a conceptual approach using Theory Synthesis to integrate fragmented theories and literature on civic education, youth political participation, and peaceful elections. The literature was selected based on specific criteria, ensuring relevance to the subject matter. Data were synthesized to create a cohesive theoretical framework that connects the role of civic education with the political engagement of Generation Z.

**Findings** – The study found that effective civic education, which integrates digital technology and social media, can significantly enhance Generation Z's political awareness and active participation. The findings suggest that current civic education curricula need to be updated to reflect the digital realities of Generation Z, thus improving the quality of their participation in elections and supporting a more peaceful democratic process.

**Originality/Value** – This research contributes to the field by proposing a more adaptive civic education model that aligns with the technological inclinations of Generation Z. It offers a novel perspective by highlighting the importance of social media as a tool for political learning and engagement, an area often overlooked in existing studies.

**Practical Implications** – The study underscores the need for educational policymakers to revise civic education curricula, incorporating digital and social media tools to better engage Generation Z. Implementing these changes could enhance the political literacy and participation of young voters, ultimately supporting more democratic and peaceful elections in Indonesia.

**Keywords** Civic Education, Generation Z, Political Participation, Peaceful Elections, Digital Integration

**Paper type** Conceptual paper

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## 1. Introduction

As articulated by Aristotle in *Nicomachean Ethics*, humans are *Zoon Politicon*—beings naturally inclined to engage in politics and societal interactions. This social aspect of humanity is closely linked to the concept of democratic education, wherein education plays a pivotal role in shaping the awareness and participation of citizens in democratic processes (Gintis et al., 2015). In this context, democratic education is not merely a political agenda but the very essence of education itself. The values of democracy recognized in various traditions, including Islamic teachings as outlined in Surah Ali Imran, verse 159, demonstrate that the principles of democracy have a strong foundation across different cultures and religions (Wijaya, 2020).

In the framework of modern democracy, peaceful elections are a cornerstone for achieving a healthy and functioning democracy. Democracy, as a system of government representing the sovereignty of the people, grants every citizen the equal right to participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives. In Indonesia, elections are governed within the framework of Pancasila democracy, emphasizing the principles of Direct, General, Free, and Secret voting (LUBER), aimed at ensuring that every citizen can exercise their voting rights safely and free from coercion or intimidation (Wibowo et al., 2022).

However, the implementation of elections in Indonesia continues to face various challenges. The political experiences during the 2014 and 2019 elections revealed serious threats such as black campaigns and the politicization of religion, exacerbated by the role of social media in intensifying political polarization. Social media enables the rapid and widespread dissemination of information and opinions, often triggering deep emotional reactions and increasing social tensions (Levin, 2015). These challenges highlight the limitations of previous research, which has inadequately explored the impact of social media and the politicization of religion on the conduct of peaceful elections in Indonesia.

Over the last decade, the role of religion in politics has become increasingly relevant, particularly following the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States, which sparked renewed debates on the relationship between religion and politics in the modern era. The revitalization of religion in politics is a global phenomenon, not confined to a single region but spanning from the West to Southeast Asia (Ubaedillah, 2015). In Southeast Asia, the resurgence of political Islam within the democratization process provides an intriguing example of how Muslims engage with democratic values and civil rights within the context of developing nation-states. However, existing research remains limited in uncovering how this interaction affects the stability and peacefulness of election processes in the region.

The importance of democratic education becomes even more apparent when considering the role of younger generations, particularly Generation Z, in shaping Indonesia's political future. According to the 2020 Population Census, Generation Z dominates Indonesia's population, numbering 74.93 million people, or about 27.94% of the total population (Rainer, 2023). Additionally, a report from the General Election Commission (KPU) states that in the 2024 elections, the electorate will be dominated by the younger generation, with 55% coming from the millennial and Z generations (Rosa, 2023). However, despite the significant potential of youth in politics, concerns arise regarding their low participation in elections. The Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (KemenPPPA) found that voter turnout among first-time voters in previous elections was below average, possibly due to a lack of information and political understanding among the younger generation (LM Psychology UGM 2024). International research also indicates a similar trend, where youth interest and engagement in politics tend to be low, even though they continue to support political values such as solidarity, equality, and tolerance (Schulz et al., 2008).

Various studies have demonstrated the importance of civic education as a tool to support peaceful elections and enhance political participation among the youth. Quality civic education can empower Generation Z to comprehend democratic principles, internalize civic values, and develop the skills necessary to participate actively and peacefully in democratic processes. Therefore, investing in civic education is not only a moral responsibility but also a crucial strategy to address the deficiencies in political understanding and electoral participation among the younger generation. This research aims to identify the limitations of existing civic education and propose more effective approaches to enhance political participation and the conduct of peaceful elections in Indonesia.

Thus, this study seeks to fill the existing knowledge gap concerning the interaction between civic education, youth political participation, and the conduct of peaceful elections. It also proposes a more adaptive and relevant model of civic education for the current youth context, which could serve as a foundation for better educational policy in the future.

## 2. Methods

This study employs a conceptual approach by adopting the Theory Synthesis method (Jaakkola, 2020). Theory Synthesis aims to achieve conceptual integration from various theories or strands of literature. This method presents a new or enhanced perspective on a concept or phenomenon by connecting elements that were previously unrelated or even contradictory. The criteria for selecting the literature include relevance to the research topic, theoretical contributions, and appropriateness to the political context in Indonesia. The goal is to summarize and integrate existing knowledge, thereby enabling a more comprehensive and holistic understanding of the role of civic education in Generation Z's political participation and the conduct of peaceful elections in Indonesia.

### 2.1 Research Design

This design is intended to link previously fragmented theories, creating a new conceptual narrative. Theory Synthesis also aids in identifying gaps in existing research and offers more cohesive explanations by relating previous findings within a more structured framework (Jaakkola, 2020).

### 2.2 Data Collection and Analysis

Data is collected from various relevant literature and analyzed through the integration of theories to create a new perspective. This process involves filtering, reducing, and organizing information from various sources to produce a more complete and coherent theoretical synthesis (Jaakkola, 2020).

### 2.3 Research Ethics

This research ensures that all theories and concepts selected and used are well-explained and justified. Every analytical step is conducted transparently, with strict academic integrity to avoid plagiarism and to maintain the validity of the scientific contribution.

Through this approach, the study is expected to make a significant contribution to the development of more relevant and effective theories of civic education for the younger generation in Indonesia, particularly in the context of the conduct of peaceful elections.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1 The Essence of Civic Education

In the 1990s, civic education gained increased attention as the number of democracies around the world rose from 76 to 117, marking the 'third wave of democracy.' Key events such as the end of apartheid in South Africa, the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the disintegration of the Soviet Union spurred changes in civic education approaches, evolving from a focus solely on loyalty to the state to becoming an instrument that teaches human rights and the responsibilities of citizenship. This new focus aimed to prevent identity-based political conflicts and strengthen pluralism within society (Smith et al., 2022).

Today, Civic Education (PKn) serves a role far beyond merely transferring knowledge about citizens' rights and duties. PKn encompasses efforts to shape political identity and responsible participation in a democratic society. It is positioned as a complex subject that integrates various disciplines and is designed to train students, especially Generation Z, in critical thinking and active participation in democratic life. In the context of Indonesian politics, PKn has a strong ontological foundation in the values of Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution, which underpin democratic education (Berlian & Dewi, 2021). The goal is to steer the younger generation away from practices that undermine democracy, such as money politics and identity politics, which often compromise the integrity of free and fair elections as mandated by law (Nur, 2020).

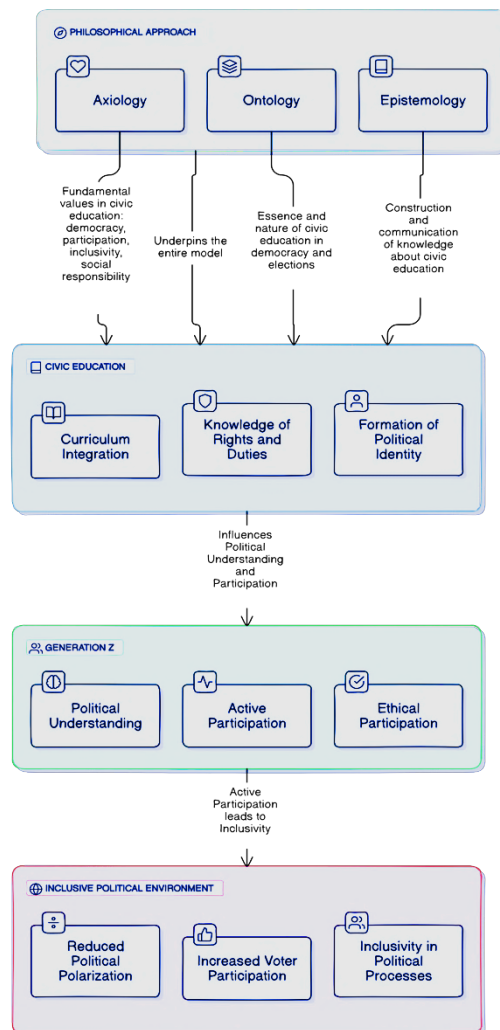


Figure 1. Civic Education and Inclusive Political Environment

This diagram illustrates how civic education can foster an inclusive political environment for Generation Z, including the integration of curriculum, knowledge about rights and obligations, and the formation of a democratic political identity.

### *3.2 Elections as an Instrument of Democracy*

Elections are the primary mechanism in a democracy that provides a means for people to participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives. In Indonesia, elections are conducted within the framework of Pancasila democracy, emphasizing the principles of Direct, General, Free, and Secret voting (LUBER), designed to ensure citizens' voting rights are exercised safely and free from coercion. However, the political experiences during the 2014 and 2019 elections revealed challenges such as black campaigns and the politicization of religion, exacerbated by the role of social media, which often triggers political polarization and heightens social tensions (Levin, 2015). Although Indonesia's electoral system has a strong legal foundation, truly democratic and peaceful elections require further addressing of these various challenges (Wibowo et al., 2022).

### *3.3 Generation Z Participation in Elections*

Generation Z, the largest demographic group in Indonesia according to the 2020 Population Census, holds significant potential for political participation, with a population of 74.93 million people, or approximately 27.94% of the total population. In the 2024 elections, 55% of voters are projected to come from the millennial and Z generations, underscoring the importance of this group in determining election outcomes (Rosa, 2023). Generation Z's participation in the 2019 elections reached 81.9%, but the quality of this participation remains a concern due to the low level of political understanding among young voters. The main obstacles are the lack of relevant political information and inadequate political education. Effective civic education is expected to empower Generation Z to understand democratic principles and participate actively and peacefully in the political process (Evita, 2023).

### *3.4 Inclusive Political Awareness of Generation Z*

Inclusive political education plays a crucial role in shaping Generation Z's political awareness, encompassing an understanding of their rights and obligations as citizens, as well as the skills to think critically and make informed political decisions. Civic education supported by social media becomes an essential tool in achieving this goal, given that Generation Z heavily relies on social media as their primary source of information. The political awareness developed through inclusive education and the use of social media not only provides information but also facilitates discussion and direct engagement in relevant political issues.

The findings of this study highlight the importance of more adaptive and relevant civic education to address challenges in Generation Z's political participation and enhance the quality of peaceful elections in Indonesia. Civic education must be designed with consideration for the use of social media as a learning tool, as Generation Z tends to rely on this medium as their primary information source. With this approach, Generation Z is expected to be more actively engaged and possess a deeper political understanding, which in turn can support more democratic and peaceful elections in Indonesia.

## **4. Discussion**

This study finds that civic education plays a critical role in shaping the political participation of youth, particularly Generation Z, as well as in supporting the peaceful conduct of

elections in Indonesia. These findings align with previous research, which suggests that civic education not only transfers knowledge about citizens' rights and duties but also fosters an inclusive political identity and a sense of responsibility in democratic life (Berlian & Dewi, 2021; Smith et al., 2022). In the Indonesian political context, civic education grounded in the values of Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution is crucial in preparing the younger generation to avoid practices that undermine democracy, such as money politics and identity politics.

These results are consistent with the literature that highlights the importance of democratic education in strengthening political participation and maintaining political stability in diverse societies (Gintis et al., 2015; Levin, 2015). However, this study also reveals that challenges in Generation Z's political participation remain significant, particularly due to the low level of political understanding and the limited availability of information for young voters. This adds a new dimension to the existing literature by emphasizing the role of social media as a crucial tool for political learning among Generation Z, a factor often overlooked in previous studies.

These findings reinforce the theory that inclusive and relevant civic education is key to building a generation that is not only aware of its rights and responsibilities as citizens but also capable of actively and constructively participating in the democratic process. Thus, this study contributes to the development of civic education theory by emphasizing the importance of adapting curricula to the technological advancements and digital media that dominate the lives of Generation Z.

Practically, this study suggests that the civic education curriculum needs to be updated to better align with the needs and preferences of Generation Z, including the integration of social media as a learning tool. It also highlights the need for a more holistic approach to civic education, one that not only focuses on political theory but also on the development of practical skills in critical thinking and active participation. Effective implementation of civic education can improve the quality of Generation Z's political participation and, in turn, support the conduct of more peaceful and democratic elections in Indonesia.

This study has several limitations, including a reliance on existing literature without direct empirical data from Generation Z in Indonesia. This may affect the generalizability of these findings. Moreover, while the conceptual approach offers new perspectives, it still requires testing through more in-depth and comprehensive empirical research.

Given these limitations, future research should involve empirical data to test the effectiveness of the proposed civic education model in this study. Additionally, further research could explore the specific role of social media in facilitating Generation Z's political participation and its impact on the quality of elections in Indonesia. In-depth studies on the factors influencing political awareness and active participation among Generation Z would also be valuable for enriching the literature and improving existing educational approaches.

This study underscores the importance of more adaptive and relevant civic education to enhance Generation Z's political participation and support peaceful elections in Indonesia. By integrating social media as a learning tool, it is hoped that Generation Z will become more actively engaged and have a deeper understanding of politics, thereby contributing to a healthier and more stable democratic process. This study contributes to the development of civic education theory and practice while paving the way for further research in this field.

## 5. Conclusion

This study emphasizes the importance of civic education as a vital instrument in shaping the political awareness and active participation of young people, particularly Generation Z,

within the context of democracy in Indonesia. Adaptive and relevant civic education, with the integration of digital technology and social media, has been shown to empower young people to participate constructively in peaceful and democratic election processes. These findings underline that civic education is not merely about knowledge transfer but also about shaping an inclusive and responsible political identity.

This study successfully addresses most of the initial questions regarding the role of civic education in supporting peaceful elections in Indonesia. However, some limitations, such as reliance on literature and the lack of direct empirical data, suggest the need for further research. Future studies are recommended to explore more deeply the effectiveness of the proposed civic education model by involving empirical data, as well as to investigate the specific role of social media in facilitating Generation Z's political participation.

The practical implications of this study include the need for updating the civic education curriculum to make it more relevant to the needs and preferences of Generation Z, as well as the importance of a holistic approach that combines political theory with the development of critical thinking skills and active participation. With proper implementation, civic education can enhance the quality of political participation among the younger generation and support the realization of more peaceful and democratic elections in Indonesia. This study not only contributes to the development of civic education theory but also opens the way for better educational policies and further research in the future.

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## Declarations

### Author contribution statement

**Mirza Mahbub Wijaya:** Conceptualization, Writing - Original Draft, Writing - Review & Editing, Project Administration. **Hamsar Suci Amalia:** Methodology, Investigation, Writing - Review & Editing.

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### Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

### Declaration of interest statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

### Additional information

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