

## Students' Construction on Political Space Openness for Generation Z

**Hesty Kartikasari** Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Indonesia

**Agus Machfud Fauzi** Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Indonesia

### Abstract

Generation Z has had enough age to join the political space. They have great potential in politics. Political parties open space for the public to participate in general election contestations as legislative candidates. Generation Z is no exception. However, the problem is when Generation Z has no interest in entering the political space. This can be motivated by the younger generation, both millennials and generation Z, who are less interested in political issues. And the absence of space and desire to channel their political desires and aspirations. This study aims to determine students' views as Generation Z and identify the processes of externalization, objectification, and internalization of the opening of political space. The method applied is a qualitative method. The theoretical perspective used is the social construction theory of Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann. The results of the study show that students as Generation Z have determined their political position in choosing candidates. However, they are not interested enough or have not had the full opportunity to join a political party).

### Keywords

Political Space; Generation Z; Construction

### INTRODUCTION

Indonesia has named as a country which runs democratic system. In its journey, general election becomes a significant part as a means for citizens, including generation Z, for actively participating. Politics is always open for them in terms of expressing their potential and roles. However, their potentials will not be revealed optimally if they have no interest in politics. As beginners, they relatively have not yet decided to vote. This phenomenon considerably implies that politics has not taken gen Z and millennials' heart (Berita UNAIR, 2019). Fitri, Budiman, & Febrian (2022) mentions that millennials' participation is shown low. This situation is due to their weak curiosity on political

news, lack of socialization by Indonesian General Election Commission (KPU), and their participation in any political campaign.

Community in a democratic system plays both direct and indirect roles which are considerably able to influence government policy in making decisions ((Fitri et al., 2022). Participation and decisions from generation Z are crucial in determining people's representatives in running the government. Young or novice voters are considered to have great potential in the political space. Their well-managed potentials can be an answer for political parties in facing various demands.

A study by Candranegara, Mahardhika, & Mirta (2018) elaborates that today's

political development faces multiple challenges. Among those, some are massive hoaxes, hate speech, lack of education, and spreading identity politics. Besides, a number of factors such as experience, age, and seniority slow millennials and gen Z down to obtain chances in election—including in 2019. Their minimum competencies and experiences are said to put them only as secondary actors for elites.

Settlement for youth in political parties are not as easy as we can imagine. Thus, political education is urgent to open their eyes—as well as opportunities. They need to well understand knowledge on politics so that public opinions can be processed better. In this case, political parties also have roles to ensure the participation of youth in their programs.

Political parties have a big task in influencing the participation of the younger generation. Research by Astuti (2022) emphasizes the importance of maintaining millennial voices. To maintain their voices, political parties must dominate social media. Some strategies can be taken to influence millennial votes. First, political parties create infographics that contain the vision and mission of the candidate pairs. Second, they use social media to convey their political messages. Third, when the millennial generation gets interested, political parties must take advantage of the moment to form a community among them.

Martian, Kusnendar, & Rachmiatie (2020) elaborate that the political motives of millennials are fundamental rights and integral needs. The involvement of millennial politicians in politics is practically a form of self-actualization. For example, the Indonesian Solidarity Party and its millennial politicians are trying to come up with a new political spirit and style. Millennial politicians need special efforts to build political relations. The key is adaptation. With good political adaptation

will be able to increase the ability to respond to a new fact.

Rachmiatie et al. (2021) try to obtain comprehensive understanding on the affirmation of young politics and regeneration in political parties. Some parties have formed by the millennial generation (PSI & PKS, for instance) and show efforts to regenerate politics by forming understanding and effective participation to run a direct role in running the government. There are supporting and inhibiting factors in party regeneration. Supporting factors include commitment, equality, and political communication. Meanwhile, the inhibiting ones include apathy, skepticism, and negative mindset towards political parties. These obstacles are due to the absence of an organized regeneration system and weak political education. Therefore, efforts are needed by the government, political parties, universities to form a political system, and political party leaders who possess the "political will" to position the millennial generation as primary actors.

As precedingly mentioned, young generation is extremely bond to social media. Millennial's dependence on social media becomes a factor why the internet massively affects political contestation. Social media can reach broader young voters and ease information, as well as accommodates the mobilization political party cadres. Youngsters can acquire any information to participate in politics.

This research offers a gap compared to any previous studies in terms of its focus. This study spotlights and examines further the views and constructions of students regarding the political space openness for generation Z. This research proposes to identify the process of externalization, objectivation, and internalization the political space openness for generation Z. Construction and understanding of the

younger generation about political space are crucial. Both would guide the younger generation to develop their political potentials which can later function for the benefit of the state and the nation.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study applied descriptive qualitative method. The qualitative approach produces descriptive data in the form of written words or sentences, proposing to elaborate the phenomenon of the political space openness for generation Z in depth. Generally, qualitative methods pay more attention to the process that goes through rather than the final outcome. Descriptive qualitative research seeks to explain and describe the existing conditions as they are. In this study, the subjects were students who were determined purposively with two criteria, namely 1) had taken at least one semester of lectures and 2) were born between 1995-2010. Data collection was obtained by interview, conducted in a semi-structured manner using the prepared guidelines. Literature studies were also applied, acquiring various data from books, articles, scientific journals, and news websites. Researchers searched articles or journals using some specific keywords such as "political participation of the younger generation" and "political space for generation Z". This emphasize that this article spotlights political space, political participation, and generation Z. The selected theory was Peter L. Berger's and Thommas Luckmaan's on social construction.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Political participation in democratic countries depart from a sense that sovereignty comes from citizens. People must be involved in every political decision-making. The right proposes to represent people in each regulation produced

(Wanma, 2015). Budiarjo (in Zulkarnaen et al., 2020) states that political participation is activity carried out in terms of political matters both individually or in groups. It is simple yet urgent, typically in some cases such as general elections. People participation both directly and indirectly can influence policies issued by the government.

Political participation can also take the form of direct participation in political parties—including going advance as a candidate in certain elections. This involvement is closely related to political awareness, which is a determining factor for it. Political awareness intertwines to knowledge and awareness, as well as individual obligations related to the community. Furthermore, political activity becomes the measure and level of someone involved in the participation process. Political participation is also influenced by the existing political space. Political space openness will encourage people to increase their participation level. Weak participation means many citizens still do not pay attention or do not play a role in various political issues or opportunities. Among all people, generation Z is said to must play significant role in politics.

Generation Z was born after generation Y. People who are included in this generation are those born between 1995-2010. Generation Z is also known as internet generation (iGeneration) because they are already connected to cyberspace and run various things assisted by technological sophistication (Widyananda, 2020). As the younger generation, gen Z has the potential and talent needed in politics. To take advantage of these talents and potentials, political space is needed. However, the Indonesian people, especially the younger generation, are not very interested in those matters. The political participation of young people is shown relatively low. This

condition is influenced by various things such as bad image of political parties. Youths tend to think of politics as a mere means of seizing power. It is only controlled by older groups with economic power so that there is no room for them. This happened with reasons. A number of power abuses and corruption cases by politicians trigger the negative view.

People's low awareness and political participation, especially the youths, are due to their negligence in political issues and problems. Many are also not sure that their attempts to influence government policy will be successful. It is possible that in elections, some people choosing to abstain think that things will not be different; things will not change—whoever is elected. Furthermore, several things put young groups in worry, such as massive provocative writings and black campaigns on social media. They are angry, worried, and afraid of hoaxes, especially in this post truth era (Zulfa et al., 2019).

The spread of hoaxes during the election period usually increases. The Ministry of Communication and Information stated that there was an increase in the number of hoaxes ahead of the 2019 Presidential Election. Data in March 2019 pointed out that 453 hoaxes came about in the form of fake news about presidential candidates, political parties, and election management bodies ((Ministry of Communication and Information Technology, 2019). The lack of awareness among Indonesians about fake information has led to the development of hoaxes in cyberspace. At present, there are many political actors who only use the voices of the younger generation as voice mines. Many political actors also only make false promises.

Awareness and participation of the younger generation is urgently needed. Their voices need to be heard and taken into account by political actors because in terms

of quantity, there are so many of them. Political expert Budiardjo stated that people's political participation is an important indicator in the development of democracy in a country. The higher the people's political participation, the higher their concern for the country's political development (Ministry of Communication and Informatics, 2021).

Increasing political awareness and participation, especially in youth, requires proper political education. This education will be a means for generation Z to finalize their understanding of political orientation in a fundamental and correct way so as to create political awareness. Political education can be obtained by Generation Z through formal education and social media (Setiyowati et al., 2022). In this case, political parties have a significant role. Apart from all the negative perceptions from the society, they can be a tool to make people aware through their political role. Based on Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution—more precisely on the point of maintaining and caring for diversity and national unity, political parties have the duty and responsibility to become homes and schools in forming leadership for the younger generation.

The youths need political education to understand the role and participation they can do—let alone the fact that several things, for example abstain group, can decline the accumulation of people's political participation. Dissatisfaction and money politics trigger that issue (Irwan et al., 2021). Political education is part of the process of political socialization. Therefore, it is a very essential part of building the participation of the younger generation.

Ramlah Surbakti (in Suardi et al., 2019) explains that political socialization is divided into two, namely political education and political indoctrination. Political education is a dialogic process

between the sender and recipient of the message. Through this process, community members recognize and study the values, norms, and political symbols of their country from various parties in the political system such as the government, political parties, and schools. Generation Z is educated through socialization to increase the awareness of the youths about political literacy. Political socialization can be carried out in the election arena to succeed the election process. It has to be done especially to minimize abstentions (Lailiyah et al., 2020). Political education aims to increase people's knowledge so that they can participate optimally. Based on the Presidential Instruction No. 12 of 1982, political education proposes to provide guidelines for youths to increase awareness of national and state life as said by Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution (Suardi et al., 2019).

Awareness of citizens, specifically generation Z, on politics can also be improved through social media. This medium has been acknowledged as intertwining generation Z's open nature—along with the technology development. Political education, therefore, can be run through that media using various attractive contents.

### **Students' Subjective Reality on Political Space Openness**

Every individual has a subjective reality which has a dialectical relationship with the objective one. Subjective reality in each individual will turn into objective after the reality becomes shared knowledge. Students consider that political space openness for generation Z implies the opportunity to take part in political matters—for example in the form of speaking opinions and criticizing government policies, participating in elections, and being part of a political party.

These activities can be carried out online through social media.

In recent years, many political actors have realized the important role of social media as a means to win elections. In the 2014 election, it was estimated that around 18.3 million first time voters who came from young people between the ages of 17-24 years. It was calculated that most of them were active users of social media (Morissan, 2016). Candidates use social media as a means to carry out campaigns and gain sympathy and votes from the people. Communication built through social media must be creative because youths do not like rigid and formal ways. Candidates for legislators implement creative approaches by presenting interesting content on their respective social media to attract young people, typically for their programs (Febriani, 2020).

However, the preferences of students as a young group regarding politicians are not so good. This phenomenon has an impact on their interest in the opening of political space which is not yet utilized optimally. Several cases such as power abuse and corruption committed by politicians and officials makes the younger generation less interested in getting involved in politics. Political actors are considered only focusing on positions rather than the interests of society. Not only that, many legislative candidates only use young people as a source of votes to win the election; they have no idea about fulfilling various promises they made during the campaign. Political space has indeed been opened for the younger generation, but they have not been given enough opportunities to become members of councils because the seats are dominated by seniors.

### **Objective Reality on Political Space Openness**

Objective reality is created through institutionalization—initiated with the repeated externalization process so that it forms a habit. The habit can be hereditary until it eventually becomes a tradition.

Objective reality is an influential thing coming from outside of the individual. It can be in the form of norms and regulations in society. For a democratic country like Indonesia, this reality can be in the form of the fact that citizens have the right to take part in political decisions. Every citizen has the same right to play a role either directly or indirectly to formulate, develop, and produce law and government work. Politics is simply open to all people.

According to the Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 12 of 2003 on the General Election of Members of the Regional Representative Council, the People's Representative Council, and the Regional People's Representative Council in Article 13, every citizen who is 17 already years old can have the right to vote or take part in elections. Then, based on Law Number 2 of 2008, political parties are established and formed by at least 50 citizens aged 21 years with a notarial deed (Secretariat General of the People's Representative Council n.d.). Thus, political space has been opened for generation Z who is old enough to join a political party.

As citizens, generation Z also experiences an educational process. Political education has an important role in shaping people's political participation. This education has started early, for example since elementary school education through certain subjects. Citizens are educated to act according to democratic system. Therefore, political space openness is indeed important—in this context for generation Z. This openness will accommodate their

voices about the country, including criticism that is useful for common progress.

### **Externalization**

Berger states that at this stage, humans go through efforts to pour themselves into the world, both in physical and mental activities. Externalization is also referred to as the nature of the human self itself, and it is an anthropological necessity that humans always overflow themselves into the world in which they exist. Humans have experienced this stage since the beginning because when they are born, they already have the basic capital, namely the readiness to accept society in their consciousness. Externalization is an important process because humans will experience adaptation to the socio-cultural environment. As a democratic country, Indonesia is obliged to guarantee an open political space. Every citizen has the right to play a role in politics after meeting the specified age limit.

However, it is undeniable that the political space has been wide open for generation Z, and they can use it to express ideas—through technological developments. Social media is the main channel for opening up this political space. In times approaching elections, social media can be used as a tool for campaigning for candidates who nominate. The voice of the younger generation is an important part considering the large number of young people. Space for politics has indeed been provided for generation Z, but they have not been given many opportunities, especially to join political parties. Some political parties have indeed opened the widest possible space for the public to participate in the general election contestation as legislative candidates. However, it is felt that this opportunity is still not open to millennials. Most of the contestations were attended by senior political actors.

### **Objectification**

Berger states that this stage is a result that has been achieved both mentally and physically. The result finds its own producer as a facticity that exists outside and is different from the individual who created it. Community objectivity includes several elements such as institutions, roles or identities. At this stage, a person will have his thoughts objectively based on experiences.

In this context, generation Z eventually understands its political role. The real role is their participation in following the general election. Political space openness successfully leads them expressing voices both in real life and social media.

Political parties have a considerable role in opening up political space—which can be interpreted in several ways. A number political parties have stated that they are opening wide opportunities for young people who want to join their party. They aim to encourage the younger generation to be more politically literate and to take seats in strategic sectors. However, it can also be interpreted that political actor simply want to use generation Z as anglers and attract people's interest; it's all a matter of political image.

### **Internalization**

The internalization stage understands that the individual has become part of society. Individuals first obtain socialization before arriving at this stage. This stage is defined as the re-absorption of the objective world into awareness in such a way that ultimately the individual's subjective influence is influenced by the social structure and implements it in the real world. Internalization is created because of individual efforts to identify. Someone will give the role of attitude from himself. Socialization about politics itself, especially in secondary socialization, has existed in

elementary school education where there is already basic knowledge about politics. This proves once again that political education is very crucial. Through this political education, people will be encouraged to be politically literate and increase their political awareness and participation. A person has been taught to exercise their right to vote since they were young. For example, when a student participates and gives his/her voting rights in the election for class president. Political education is carried out to prepare citizens to be ready to give active roles and contributions to political aspects—which eventually assist the governing process.

Technological developments and accessible information also ease the socialization process. It is this series of socialization processes that will shape a person's attitude—including how individuals internalize it. Generation Z is considered to be less interested in political issues. This is with reasons; massive terrible cases such as power abuse and corruption committed by political actors worsen the political image before the eyes of youth. Even so, the openness of information on social media allows them to learn, analyze issues, and voice opinions and political aspirations.

### **CONCLUSION**

Generation Z plays a significant role in politics because of their potential. However, this potential needs to be accommodated for channeling of political aspirations. Broad political space openness can encourage generation Z to optimize their potential. As part of the generation Z, current students consider that political space has been opened for them—supported by the sophisticate technology developments. They can express their political aspirations there, voicing criticism and suggestions for

government policies that are deemed unfavorable to the people.

The younger generation has also been given space to join political parties, including taking part in legislative elections when they have reached the age standard. However, they think that the political share for them is only secondary; they are only a complement to the elite. Simply, the seniors are still dominating as political actors. The disinterest of the younger generation in political issues is also an obstacle of entering politics—which has been terribly imagined. This phenomenon is due to various problems caused by political actors such as endless power abuse and corruption. The younger generation hopes that political space openness is not only for attracting interest and votes on the surface.

## REFERENCES

- Astuti, N. (2022). The Importance of Maintaining the Vote of Millennials for Political Parliaments Pass the Parliamentary Threshold in 2024 Election. *Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Studies*, 4(2), 8–15.
- Berita UNAIR. (2019). *Generasi Milenial Butuh Ruang Politik untuk Berekspresi*. UNAIR NEWS. Retrieved from <https://news.unair.ac.id/2019/01/24/generasi-milenial-butuh-ruang-politik-untuk-berekspresi/?lang=id>.
- Candranegara, I. M. W., Mahardhika, I. P. E., & Mirta, I. W. (2018). Partisipasi Generasi Milenial dalam Kancah Politik Nasional 2019. *Jurnal Bali Membangun Bali*, 2(1), 21–30.
- Febriani, N. S. (2020). Preferensi Media Sosial Generasi Milenial pada Tingkat Pengetahuan Calon Legislatif. *Nyimak: Journal of Communication*, 4(1), 89–107.
- Fitri, U., Budiman, N., & Febrian, R. (2022). Partisipasi dan Perilaku Politik Generasi Milenial pada Pemilihan Bupati Tanah Datar Tahun 2020 di Nagari Saruaso Kecamatan Tanjung Emas. *JOELS: Journal of Election and Leadership*, 2(2).
- Irwan, L., J. A. R., & Jaya, I. (2021). Peningkatan Kesadaran Politik Pada Generasi Muda di Kabupaten Maros. *Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat Hasanuddin*, 2(2), 76–99.
- Kementrian Komunikasi dan Informatika. (2019). Jelang Pilpres Hoax Naik, dari 175 di Januari Jadi 453 di Maret. KOMINFO. Retrieved from [https://m.kominfo.go.id/content/detail/17644/jelang-pilpres-hoax-naik-dari-175-di-januari-jadi-453-di-maret/0/sorotan\\_media](https://m.kominfo.go.id/content/detail/17644/jelang-pilpres-hoax-naik-dari-175-di-januari-jadi-453-di-maret/0/sorotan_media).
- Kementrian Komunikasi dan Informatika. (2021). Politik Digital Anak Muda. KOMINFO. Retrieved from <https://www.kominfo.go.id/content/detail/34036/politik-digital-anak-muda/0/artikel>.
- Lailiyah, N., Pradhana, G. A., & Yuliyanto, M. (2020). Youthizen Political Literacy: Educating The Generation Z. *Jurnal Ilmu Sosial*, 19(June), 22–39.
- Martian, F., Kusnendar, A. N., & Rachmiatie, A. (2020). Motif Dan Orientasi Politik Generasi Milenial Motives and Political Orientation of Milenial Generations Indonesia Solidarity Party. *Dialektika: Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi*, 7(2), 159–173.
- Morissan. (2016). Tingkat Partisipasi Politik dan Sosial Generasi Muda Pengguna Media Sosial. *Jurnal Visi Komunikasi*, 15(01), 96–113.
- Rachmiatie, A., Martian, F., & Suherman, M. (2021). Young Political Affirmations in Accelerating Re-generation in Political Parties. *Proceedings of the Social and Humanities Research Symposium (SORES 2020)*, 562(Sores 2020), 4–10.
- Sekretariat Jendral DPR RI. (n.d.). *Keanggotaan DPR RI*. Retrieved from <https://dpr.go.id/tentang/keanggotaan>.



- Setiyowati, R., Alfiandra, & Nurdiansyah, E. (2022). Pendidikan Politik Generasi Z di Era Distrupsi. *Bhineka Tunggal Ika: Kajian Teori Dan Praktik Pendidikan PKN*, 09(01), 94–98.
- Suardi, S., Nasution, U. H., & Zahri, C. (2019). Peran Pendidikan Politik Pada Generasi Milenial Di Kabupaten Deli Serdang. *Jurnal Ekonomi Dan Bisnis*, 2(2), 1–7.
- Wanma, A. V. (2015). Pentingnya Pendidikan Politik Generasi Muda Terhadap Pelaksanaan Partisipasi Politik di Distrik Samofa Kabupaten Biak Numfor. *Politica: Jurnal Ilmu Politik*, 2(6).
- Widyananda, R. F. (2020). Pengertian Gen Z serta Karakteristiknya, Ketahui agar Tak Keliru. *Merdeka.com*. Retrieved from <https://www.merdeka.com/jatim/pengertian-gen-z-serta-karakteristiknya-ketahui-agar-tak-keliru-klm.html>
- Zulfa, A. N., Sari, E. P. P., & Trisiana, A. (2019). Meningkatkan Kesadaran Politik di Kalangan Anak Muda. *Global Citizen: Jurnal Ilmiah Kajian Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan*, 7(1).
- Zulkarnaen, F., Adara, A. S., Rahmawati, A., Wartadiayu, L., & Pamungkas, M. D. (2020). Partisipasi Politik Pemilih Milenial pada Pemilu di Indonesia. *Jurnal Politikom Indonesiana*, 5(2), 55–63.