

Analysis of the Role of Social Media in Shaping GEN Z's Political Literacy in the 2024 General Election

Deni Rahmadani, Cecep Hidayat

Pascasarjana Ilmu Politik, Fakultas Ilmu Sosial Ilmu Politik, UNiversitas Indonesia

Article Info

Article history:

Received: 31 May 2025

Publish: 1 July 2025

Keywords:

Social Media;

Political Literacy;

Generation Z;

Election 2024.

Abstract

The 2024 General Election marks a significant turning point in Indonesia's political landscape, particularly with the rising participation of Generation Z as first-time voters. This generation is highly connected to social media, which serves as their primary source of political information. This study highlights the urgency of understanding how social media influences the political literacy of Gen Z, given their vulnerability to misinformation and digital propaganda. Theoretically, this research is grounded in the concept of political literacy, which encompasses the ability to comprehend political systems, think critically about information, and engage in political processes. A qualitative approach was employed using a literature review method to examine the impact of social media on Gen Z's political understanding and attitudes. The findings reveal that social media plays a significant role in shaping the political behavior and attitudes of young people, particularly through its fast-paced and interactive communication. Social media also serves as a platform for discussion and opinion formation, which can enhance political participation. However, challenges such as the spread of hoaxes and opinion polarization remain substantial obstacles. Therefore, it is essential to strengthen media literacy and political education so that Generation Z can become critical and rational voters. This study offers strategic recommendations for policymakers, educators, and society to positively leverage the potential of social media in supporting democratic development.

This is an open access article under the [Lisensi Creative Commons Atribusi-BerbagiSerupa 4.0 Internasional](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/)



Corresponding Author:

Deni Rahmadani

UNiversitas Indonesia

Email: denirahmadani98@gmail.com

1. INTRODUCTION

The 2024 election in Indonesia is a crucial event in the country's political history, marked by various dynamics that emerge along with the development of information and communication technology. The mass media has a central role in shaping people's understanding and their political behavior. After the New Order era, the mass media in Indonesia presented various information with an independent tendency, encouraging people to be more critical of political issues (Cornelia et al., 2024).

One important phenomenon is the role of social media in shaping political literacy, especially among Generation Z. Generation Z, born between 1997 and 2012, is a group that grew up in the digital era and is very familiar with technology and social media platforms. Social media has become a dominant tool in political communication, providing a platform for political parties, legislative candidates and stakeholders to convey messages, build images and mobilize support (Yusrizal & Sasongko, 2024). For the younger generation,

platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, TikTok and YouTube have become the main sources of political information, replacing traditional media.

The role of social media in shaping Generation Z's political literacy is very significant. This platform not only provides political information but also influences their way of thinking, attitudes and political participation (Akhyar Anshori et al., 2023). Political literacy includes an understanding of the political system, the ability to critically evaluate political information, and active participation in the political process. With fast and easy access to information, Generation Z has the potential to become more informed and participatory voters.

However, the use of social media also presents challenges, such as the spread of inaccurate information, fake news (hoaxes) and polarization of public opinion (Akhyar Anshori et al., 2023). Therefore, it is important to analyze how social media affects the political literacy of Generation Z and how they filter and process the information they receive. The millennial generation and Gen Z, with their large numbers, are not just a silent majority but are active entities. The virtual world they use provides abundant information for free (Dila Novita, 2020). The majority of first-time voters have a dynamic and tentative political orientation.

Social media is defined as a collection of internet-based applications built on Web 2.0 concepts and technologies, allowing users to create and share content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Unlike mass media, where information is produced and selected by journalists or media companies (Knoll et al., 2020), social media is a digital platform that allows users to express their opinions and thoughts and exchange information (Putra Alamsyah et al., 2021). The presence of social media has overthrown the principle that only mass media can determine, select and convey information. Social media allows non-journalists to produce and disseminate information. This shows that social media is a broad arena where information with varying degrees of truth circulates.

High penetration rates can be interpreted as an indication of high levels of connectivity and digitalization in the region. With widespread internet access, voters can obtain information more easily, communicate efficiently, and access various information online and offline.

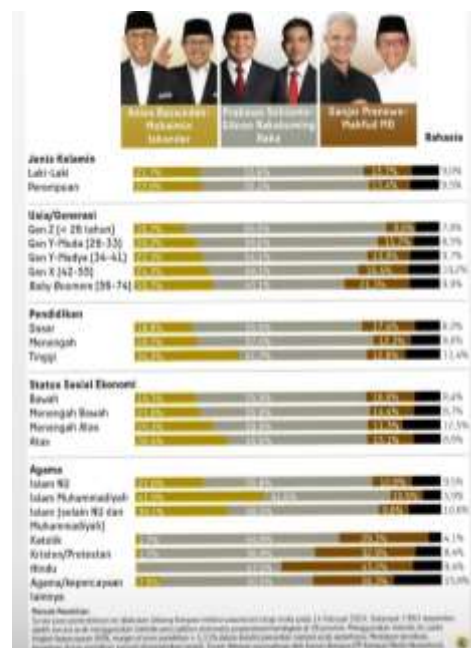


Figure 1.1 Kompas Research and Development Survey February 2024

Source: Kompas Research and Development Survey 15 February 2024

Based on the image, there is a comparison of the percentage of voters from each candidate pair. The Kompas Research and Development Research in February also explained that new voters are categorized as voters with the largest number in the 2024 presidential election, namely Gen Z with an age range of 17-21 years who are exercising their right to vote for the first time.

First-time voters, aged 17-21, who are involved in the election process for the first time, are the main focus of this research. They are the generation that will shape the political direction of the country, but their lack of political experience and knowledge makes them vulnerable to negative campaign influences. Without adequate critical skills, they are easily influenced by content found on social media.

The main indicators of political literacy are political participation and critical understanding of the community towards political activities. New voters often have weak political literacy, with a tendency to follow the majority rather than making rational choices based on long-term vision (Sukmajati & Hahsun, 2019).

Given the crucial role of social media in shaping Generation Z's political literacy and its potential impact on the 2024 General Election, this study aims to comprehensively analyze how these digital platforms influence young voters' understanding, attitudes, and political participation. Considering the complexity of the interaction between social media and political literacy, this study will explore both the opportunities and challenges that arise, as well as their implications for the quality of democracy in Indonesia. The results of this study are expected to provide valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and the general public in an effort to improve political and media literacy among Generation Z. The author formulates the research question regarding How is the role of social media in shaping Gen Z's political literacy in the 2024 presidential election?

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach to analyze the role of social media in shaping Generation Z's political literacy in the 2024 Election. Creswell (2016) explains that this method was chosen because it allows for an in-depth understanding of complex phenomena in a social and political context. Data were collected through literature studies, journals and official documents. Miles & Huberman (1994) stated that literature studies include books, scientific articles and relevant research reports, while journals and official documents such as government reports and research institutions provide a comprehensive picture of the topic being studied.

3. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. The Role of Social Media in Political Communication

Through social media, political parties and legislative candidates to presidential and vice-presidential candidates can build a positive image and mobilize support from the community. Campaigns conducted on social media are often more personal and interactive, allowing candidates to communicate directly with voters through comments, direct messages and Q&A sessions. These interactions not only help build closer relationships between candidates and voters but also create a sense of involvement and active participation among the community.

According to Nambo & Puluuluwa (2005) politics is human behavior that aims to influence or maintain the order of a group of people by using power. In the realm of political campaigns, communication activities are designed to influence individuals to develop insights, attitudes and behaviors that are in line with the intentions of the information disseminator. Modern political campaigns focus on general elections, especially those related to the election of the president or head of state. Rice and

Paisley assert that political campaigns are a form of political communication carried out to gain political support from the community.

Before the use of social media became common, politicians had utilized the internet in campaigning, seeing it as a potential tool to reform mass democratic politics by raising voices from the bottom up. The internet was used by those in power for the benefit of their group, however, the internet also functioned as a platform to disseminate information and create interactive discussions between politicians and their supporters. The internet offers various advantages for interest groups in conveying their opinions or aspirations (Asih, 2011; Elyta et al., 2023).

The use of the internet in politics has grown, especially during the 2004 and 2009 general elections in Indonesia. Political parties, candidates for the DPR/DPRD, and presidential and vice-presidential candidates have increasingly used the internet in their campaign strategies Fadillah (2003). In addition, Dwitama (2022) explains that Barack Obama's victory in the United States Presidential Election is often considered a success in utilizing social media where around 30 percent of his campaign messages were disseminated through the platform. Previously, Howard Dean successfully used the internet to attract public interest in the United States, even though he lost in the Democratic Party's national congress (Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan, 2013). In the UK, a number of members of parliament use blogs and Yahoo Groups to communicate with their constituents.

It is hoped that first-time voters who have a good level of political literacy can become critical citizens, able to produce messages and function as effective communicators, and act as intelligent agents of social change. They are expected to be able to monitor power by criticizing government policies, raising social and community issues, and processing and disseminating their information and opinions to others. Ultimately, this is expected to make a significant contribution to citizen life, political movements and the policies produced in accordance with Mihailidis's opinion (2014) (Ridha & Riwanda, 2020), producing various policies that are relevant in the context of their discussion.

High levels of political literacy are a key factor influencing voter participation in general elections. Therefore, even though there is significant participation among the younger generation, if it is not supported by adequate political literacy, such participation will be superficial and meaningless (Morissan, 2016).

The low level of political literacy among new voters can cause various social and political problems, such as vulnerability to anti-democratic group propaganda, as well as destructive political behavior that can distance politics from the interests of society Sukmajati & Mahsun (2014) Voter participation is only one form of involvement in citizenship and cannot be considered as the only indicator of a democratic society. Voter participation and citizenship participation are two different concepts

In regulations such as the Decree of the General Election Commission (KPU) No. 35 of 2004, various forms of campaign are regulated, including public debates, installation of campaign equipment in public locations, distribution of campaign materials, dissemination of information through print media or electronic media, as well as broadcasting information from radio and television broadcasts, limited meetings, rallies and face-to-face dialogues. The main objective of a political campaign is to build the desired political image. To achieve this goal, political parties must carry out various effective campaign strategies.

For the younger generation, social media has become a primary source of political information. Generation Z, who grew up in a digital environment, is more likely to rely on social media platforms for political news and information than traditional

media such as television or newspapers. Social media offers faster, more up-to-date information, often presented in a more engaging and easy-to-understand format. In addition, social media algorithms that are tailored to user preferences make it more likely for the younger generation to be exposed to content that is relevant to their interests and views.

In the context of political campaigns through social media, Arifin (2003) and Effendy (2003) and Berry Arneldi's writing (2020) identified three main contents that need to be considered. The first is a political message, which is a statement delivered either directly or indirectly, with the aim of containing political elements such as power, influence, authority and conflict. Message designers in political campaigns must be sensitive in identifying their audience and creative in designing messages to suit the characteristics of the target audience. These messages are arranged in an interesting and persuasive way to attract the attention of potential voters, because political messages play a crucial role in increasing the attractiveness of candidates. Furthermore, creative content strategies are also an important factor in the success of political campaigns through social media. Creative content includes information presented through various electronic media such as images, videos, text and others.

Creative content can convey information in a simple yet interesting way, such as photos with relevant captions, entertaining political memes or short videos that describe the profile or development concept of a candidate pair. Through this creative content, political campaigns can provide good political knowledge to the public and minimize conflicts or clashes due to politics.

In addition to being a source of information, social media also serves as a platform for political discussion and debate. Young people can use social media to share views, discuss political issues and organize collective action. This not only increases their political literacy but also encourages more active political participation. However, the use of social media in political communication also brings its own challenges, such as the spread of inaccurate information, hoaxes and polarization of public opinion.



Figure 1.2 Indonesia Social Media Advertising Reach 2024

Source: ByteDance & We Are Social, Processed by Kompas Research and Development January 2024

The interaction pattern between presidential candidate voters indicates a significant tendency towards the influence of social media and television as sources of information and considerations in political decision-making. In the context of the current digital era, campaign strategies that utilize both platforms have great potential to be effective in reaching constituents. When considering undecided voters, the effectiveness of both media can be utilized to convince them. In this context, television news has the most significant influence on political preferences, in accordance with the media consumption patterns of this group, where television is still the main source for seeking information related to the general election.

Looking at the data that has been summarized by the author in the background, it can be concluded that DKI Jakarta is a center of urbanization and population heterogeneity, reflecting diverse social, economic and cultural backgrounds. This diversity provides an opportunity for research to explore the influence of digital political literacy on political preferences in a complex population. The Populix study (2023) revealed that 28% of Gen Z Indonesia gets political information through social media, which is the dominant platform for information consumption in Jakarta. With a significant young population and increasing digital literacy, Jakarta is an ideal social laboratory to observe the dynamics of political preferences in the digital era.

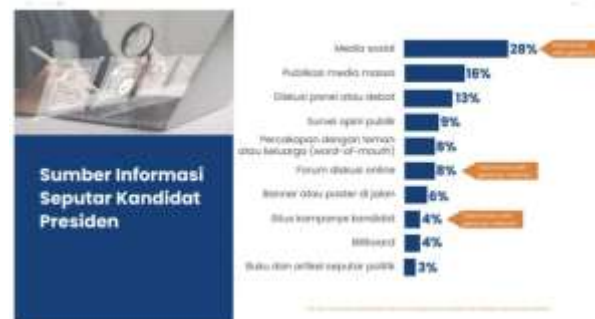


Figure 1.3. Sources of Information about Presidential Candidates

Source: Populix 2024

Populix revealed a study focusing on "Young Voters' Expectations for the 2024 Presidential Election," which showed that 28% of Generation Z (Gen Z) got information about the 2024 presidential election candidates through social media. Social media has become the main source of information for many people. This platform is not only a place for dynamic discussions, but also an arena for exchanging political views, where people actively seek information and assess the character of candidates. Based on the Populix survey, Generation Z is the group that most often uses social media to get information about candidates. However, 8% of millennials dominate online discussion forums and 4% of them also play an important role in candidate campaign sites.

In addition, information about candidates is also obtained through mass media publications 16%, panel discussions or debates 13%, public opinion surveys 9%, conversations with friends or family 8%, billboards or posters on the street 6%, advertising boards or billboards 4%, and books and articles discussing politics 3%.

The pattern of media consumption in the context of general election information in the community is reflected in the National Leadership Survey conducted by the Kompas Research and Development Institute from November 29 to December 4, 2023. The findings from this face-to-face survey indicate a significant prevalence of social media use by the community to access election-related information. As many as 29.4% of respondents admitted to accessing social media to consume election-related content, at least several times a week. Furthermore, around 11% of other respondents stated that they consumed election content on social media platforms at least once a day. The level of consumption of election information through social media exceeds the level of consumption through other media, such as online media and television. As for online media, around 23.9% of respondents admitted to routinely accessing online media to obtain election-related information.

On the other hand, the level of election content consumption through television is relatively higher compared to online media. As many as 29.6% of respondents stated that they often watch television to obtain information related to the election. Among the three types of media, online media consumption shows the lowest level. More than

45% of respondents to this survey stated that they never searched for election information through online news channels. This percentage shows a higher figure compared to social media at 31.9% and television at 23.6%.

Interestingly, the pattern of media consumption related to the election in society shows quite significant differences between supporters of the three competing presidential candidate pairs. Voters of the Anies Baswedan-Muhaimin Iskandar pair tend to be more active in consuming social media content. More than 35% of voters for the number 1 presidential candidate pair stated that they often consume election content via social media. In fact, around 12.3% of them admitted to routinely consuming election information on social media every day.

A similar pattern was also found among voters of presidential candidate pair number two. As many as 32.2% of voters of the Prabowo Subianto-Gibran Rakabuming Raka pair admitted to consuming election information via social media several times a week. In fact, more than 13.4% of them said they consumed election content on social media almost every day. A slightly different pattern was seen among voters of the Ganjar Pranowo-Mahfud MD pair. Sympathizers of the presidential candidate pair number 3 who stated that they often consumed election content via social media reached 24.9%. Meanwhile, those who admitted to consuming election information very often reached 14.8%. This proportion is relatively higher when compared to voters of Anies and Prabowo.

Although social media offers various advantages in increasing political literacy and active participation, challenges such as the spread of hoaxes and polarization of opinion remain concerns that must be addressed. Therefore, it is important for all stakeholders to support the development of critical media literacy among the public so that they can filter information effectively and make more informed political decisions. By understanding the role of social media and optimizing its use, it is hoped that political communication in Indonesia can be more transparent, effective and educational.

3.2. The Impact of Social Media on Gen Z Political Literacy

Social media influences Generation Z's political thinking and attitudes. Content presented in a variety of formats, including text, images and videos, allows political information to be delivered in an engaging and digestible manner. This not only helps in enhancing their understanding of political issues but also influences their political perceptions and attitudes. Generation Z tends to be more critical and analytical in evaluating the political information they receive and social media provides a space for them to discuss and debate political issues with their peers. These interactions, whether through comments, sharing content or participating in online discussions, help shape their political views and promote more active political engagement.

The positive potential of social media in increasing political literacy of Generation Z is also seen in their ability to become more informed and participatory voters. With easy and fast access to various sources of information, Gen Z has the opportunity to build a deeper understanding of the political system, candidates and relevant issues. Social media allows them to critically evaluate political information, participate in political discussions and actively engage in the democratic process. This participation is not only limited to general elections but also in various forms of political and social activism that can be done through digital platforms.

However, a major challenge faced is the spread of inaccurate information and fake news. Social media is often a medium for the spread of hoaxes and information manipulation that can mislead Generation Z's political understanding. Fake news that

is widely disseminated can create distortions in their perception of political reality, blur the truth and influence their political decisions. Therefore, it is important to develop critical media literacy skills among Generation Z. Critical media literacy involves the ability to evaluate sources of information, check the accuracy of content and distinguish between reliable and misleading information. With these skills, Generation Z can better filter information and make more informed and fact-based political decisions.

3.3. Implications of Social Media on Gen Z Voter Behavior

Social media has had a major impact on Generation Z's political preferences, changing the way they vote and interact with politics. Platforms like Instagram, Twitter, TikTok and YouTube provide a space for political content tailored to individual preferences through algorithms that personalize the flow of information. This allows Gen Z to get information that aligns with their political views, but can also reinforce bias and polarization. Generation Z's political preferences are often influenced by influencers and public figures who are active on social media, who can shape their political opinions and views. In addition, social media allows for the viral spread of political messages that can influence voter preferences in a short time and with wide-ranging impact.

The potential of social media to increase political participation among Generation Z is also significant. Social media facilitates various forms of political participation, from simply liking and sharing political content to engaging in digital campaigns and online petitions. Generation Z, who grew up in the digital age, are comfortable using social media as a tool to express their political views and participate in political discussions. These platforms also allow them to easily organize and coordinate collective actions, such as protests or awareness campaigns. This engagement shows that social media not only increases political awareness but also encourages real action and active participation in the democratic process.

However, major challenges in forming rational and critical voters remain. Social media is often a fertile ground for the spread of inaccurate information, hoaxes and political propaganda, which can mislead Generation Z's political understanding. They must develop critical media literacy skills to filter the information they receive, evaluate the accuracy of sources and distinguish between fact and opinion. This challenge is compounded by social media algorithms that tend to reinforce existing views, trapping users in homogenous information bubbles and inhibiting healthy and diverse discussions. Therefore, efforts to improve media literacy and political education are essential to ensure that Generation Z can become rational, critical and informed voters.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis that has been done, it can be concluded that social media plays a very significant role in shaping Generation Z's political literacy in the 2024 General Election in Indonesia. As the main platform for accessing political information, social media has changed the landscape of political communication and the way Generation Z interacts with political issues. The survey showed that 28% of Gen Z got information about the 2024 Presidential Election candidates through social media, replacing the role of traditional media. This digital platform allows political parties and candidates to communicate directly with young voters, build their image and mobilize support more effectively.

Social media has the potential to increase Gen Z's political literacy by providing quick and easy access to political information, as well as creating space for discussion and debate. However, challenges such as the spread of hoaxes, inaccurate information and the risk of

polarizing public opinion cannot be ignored. Media consumption patterns related to the election show variations among supporters of different presidential candidate pairs, indicating the influence of political preferences on information consumption behavior.

Social media plays a strategic and crucial role in shaping Generation Z's political literacy in the 2024 Election in Indonesia. As first-time voters who grew up in the digital era, Gen Z makes social media their main source of political information, replacing traditional media such as television and newspapers. Platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, and YouTube not only provide information quickly and interactively, but also encourage political engagement through discussions, digital campaigns, and collective action. However, behind this positive potential, social media also brings challenges in the form of the spread of hoaxes, disinformation, and opinion polarization reinforced by content personalization algorithms. This phenomenon can hinder the formation of critical and rational voters. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen media literacy and systematic and comprehensive political education so that Generation Z is able to filter information wisely, evaluate the accuracy of content, and make political decisions based on facts. With support from the government, educational institutions, and the community, social media can be optimized as an educational and democratic instrument in shaping a generation of young voters who are active, critical, and responsible.

5. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The author would like to thank the anonymous sponsors for their financial support in this research. Thanks are also extended to Dr. Cecep Hidayat, S.I.P., IMRI as the thesis and journal supervisor, for their valuable guidance and direction.

Appreciation is also given to the lecturers of the Postgraduate Program in Political Science, University of Indonesia, fellow students, and discussion partners who have provided support and contributions during the research process and writing of this article.

6. BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Andriyendi, D. O., S, N., & Dewi, S. F. (2023). Media Sosial dan Pengaruhnya terhadap Partisipasi Politik Pemilih Pemula pada Pilkada. *Journal of Education, Cultural and Politics*, 3(1), 2798–6020.
- Anshori, A., & Izharsyah, J. R. (2023). Pemahaman Literasi Politik Pemilih Pemula dalam Upaya Pencegahan Informasi Hoax Pemilu 2024. *Jurnal Interaksi: Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi*, 7(2), 177–184. <https://doi.org/10.30596/ji.v7i2.14727>
- Arneldi, B. (2020). Kampanye Politik Digital.
- Cassel, C. A., & Lo, C. C. (1997). Theories of political literacy. *Political Behavior*, 19, 317–335.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2016). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Sage Publications.
- Crick, B. (2000). *Essays on Citizenship*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Denver, D., & Hands, G. (1990). Does studying politics make a difference? The political knowledge, attitudes and perceptions of school students. *British Journal of Political Science*, 20(2), 263–279.
- Dwitama, M. I. (2022). Media Sosial Dan Pengaruhnya Terhadap Partisipasi Politik Masyarakat Di Pilkada 2020 Tangerang Selatan. *Independen: Jurnal Politik Indonesia Dan Global*, 3(1), 54–66.
- Effendy, O. U. (2003). *Ilmu, teori dan filsafat komunikasi*. Bandung: Citra Aditya Bakti.
- Elyta, E., Olifiani, L. P., Afhiani, S. N., & Usmulyadi, S. (2023). Utilization of Big Data on Election Politics Indonesia in Industry 4.0. *JWP (Jurnal Wacana Politik)*, 8(2), 138. <https://doi.org/10.24198/jwp.v8i2.45492>

- Fadillah, P. (2003). Partai politik dan kebijakan publik. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar.
- Mihailidis, P. (2014). Media literacy and the emerging citizen.
- Morissan. (2016). Tingkat Partisipasi Politik dan Sosial Generasi Muda Pengguna Media Sosial. *Jurnal Visi Komunikasi*, 15(01), 96–113.
- Ridha, M., & Riwanda, A. (2020). Literasi Media, Literasi Politik dan Partisipasi Kewarganegaraan Pemilih Pemula di Era Digital. *Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Pancasila Dan Kewarganegaraan*, 5(1), 110. <https://doi.org/10.17977/um019v5i1p110-121>
- Subekti, K., & Isnaini, M. (2021). Peran Generasi Milenial dan Zoomer Sebagai Pemilih Kunci Kemenangan Joe Biden Melalui Analisis Media. *Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi UHO: Jurnal Penelitian Kajian Ilmu Komunikasi Dan Informasi*, 6(2), 202–224.
- Sukmajati, M., & Mahsun, M. (2014). Memahami Tingkat Melek Politik Warga di Kabupaten Sleman. Universitas Gadjah Mada, Tim Peneliti Jurusan Politik Dan Pemerintahan. Diakses dari <https://polgov.fisipol.ugm.ac.id/f/163/2014-pendahuluan-memahami-literasi-politikwarga-di-kabupaten-sleman.pdf>.
- Virga, R. L., & Andriadi, N. (2019). Digital Literacy and HOAX on Social Media. 1st Annual International Conference on Social Sciences and Humanities (AICOSH 2019), 175–179.
- Wirga, E. W. (2016). Content Analysis on Youtube Social Media to Support Political Campaign Strategies. *Jurnal Ilmiah Informatika Dan Komputer*, 21(100), 14–26.