

Politics at the Fingertips: Institutional Trust Deficit and Generation Z's Digital Political Culture

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Abstract. The rapid advancement of digital technology has reshaped political participation and transformed how younger generations engage with institutions. This study investigates the institutional trust deficit among Generation Z in Singaraja City and explores how digital political culture influences their political attitudes and beliefs. A descriptive qualitative approach with a case study design was employed, drawing on in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and document analysis. Data were analyzed using an interactive qualitative analysis model to capture dynamic relationships between digital practices and political perceptions. The findings reveal that Generation Z's trust in institutions is fragile and strongly mediated by digital platforms, where exposure to information, disinformation, and political messaging shape their views. Moreover, the study highlights that digital political culture encourages critical, yet often skeptical, attitudes toward traditional institutions. These dynamics underscore the necessity for political actors to adopt "Hybrid Governance" and demonstrate "Authentic Responsiveness" in order to build legitimacy and foster meaningful youth participation. The study concludes that addressing the institutional trust deficit requires tailored digital political socialization strategies that align with the expectations and values of Generation Z. The implications point to the importance of integrating inclusive, transparent, and responsive digital engagement in local governance to strengthen democratic consolidation in Indonesia.

Keywords: Digital Political Culture; Trust Deficit; Generation Z; Local Election

1 Introduction

The 21st century has marked profound changes in global politics due to a powerful force: digital technologies and social media. The lives of citizens have become much more varied nowadays when acquiring information and forming political opinions, hence changing the

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old paradigm of communication between politicians and citizens' involvement. It is taken for granted that in such dynamically evolving environments, individuals acting under the label Generation Z born roughly between 1997 to 2012, are fast becoming a highly influential yet numerically dominant demographic factor in contemporary political life, particularly in Indonesia. Technological proficiency at birth coupled with deep usage of online platforms makes them critical actors whose political behaviors and perceptions must be understood. As the first true "*digital native*" generation [1], their native fluency with digital devices means they not only use social media for political purposes, but often experience and live their politics through these social media and online platforms.

These developments signal a fundamental shift in the way political information is consumed, processed and acted upon. Generation Z did not simply adapt to digital tools. They grew up with them, unlike older generations, making these platforms innate to their social and political identities. Thus, traditional political engagement strategies that may rely on conventional media and face-to-face interactions are likely to be less effective for this group. New approaches that emphasize the use of digital-centric strategies are being developed across various entities who have recognized a need to effectively reach and mobilize them. The large demographic weight of Generation Z, combined with their unique digital proficiency, makes understanding their political behavior and how they interact with institutions no longer just a fringe academic interest but a critical imperative for the future trajectory of Indonesian democracy at the local level where their collective decisions can have a direct and tangible impact on governance and policy. This section introduces the central tension that this article seeks to explore: the inherent promise of digital engagement to foster broader political participation juxtaposed with the growing challenge of institutional trust, a tension that is particularly salient for a generation that navigates the political realm primarily through digital means [1].

Gen Z and younger Millennials dominate the youth population. Paradoxical, they are. On one side, labels stick to them with words like apathetic, politically cynical, or mistrustful of formal institutions, political parties and parliaments included in that list. Sometimes their lower voter turnout compared to older generations is used as proof for this supposed lack of interest in politics. But flip that coin over, this is a highly conscious generation deeply involved in socio-political matters through unconventional means. Strong political energy that is frequently separated from the official electoral arena is reflected in digital activism, hashtag social movements, and political discussions in the virtual spaces of Instagram, TikTok, and X (Twitter).

The disparity between digital activism and electoral apathy suggests that young people in Singaraja City are redefining the concepts of "participation" and "politics." The conventional paradigms of party identification, ideology, and patronage are no longer adequate to explain the voting behavior of this youthful generation. A new set of factors including the influence of political influencers, social validation within peer groups whether or not disinformation and buzzer campaigns exist, and personal experience interacting with public issues has created a complex ecosystem of perceptions.

Digital political culture means the rapidly changing norms values and practices of political participation through digital technologies with social media at the center of it all. In Indonesia, social media is quickly emerging as an essential channel of political communication, an important avenue where political actors directly engage their constituents thereby building public opinion and mobilizing political support. It is a culture facilitated by the never seen before speed and reach of information dissemination, ease in the organization of social actions and political campaigns, and virtual political communities that defy geographical limitations. The two-fold digital political culture having enormous potential both for participation plus transparency and for the spread of harmful and misleading content

is another most crucial aspect that should be kept in mind while analyzing contemporary political dynamics.

Generation Z's prominent idealism makes them highly sensitive to perceived failures of integrity, transparency or accountability within institutions. These perceived shortcomings are often highlighted, debated and quickly disseminated through digital channels, often without sufficient context or verification. The pervasive presence of hoaxes, disinformation and smear campaigns on social media acts as a powerful catalyst for the erosion of trust. Even with their generally good digital literacy skills, the sheer volume, sophistication and emotional resonance of misinformation can make it extremely difficult for Generation Z to distinguish truth from falsehood, leading to a general distrust of information sources and, in turn, the institutions and actors discussed in the digital space [2].

This creates a critical paradox: increased digital transparency, which ideally should foster trust, can sometimes inadvertently expose weaknesses or vulnerabilities that exist within institutions. When these weaknesses are then amplified and distorted by misinformation, it can lead to a deeper erosion of trust, rather than the intended strengthening. The digital environment that enables instant and widespread sharing of information (including authentic and inauthentic negative information) directly affects Generation Z's perceptions. If political institutions fail to proactively manage their digital presence, effectively combat misinformation, or genuinely address underlying integrity and transparency issues, their perceived shortcomings can be exponentially magnified in the digital realm.

Institutional trust, often referred to as political trust, is briefly defined as individuals' belief or conviction that government institutions and their leaders will perform effectively, act with integrity, and consistently operate in the public interest. It is a critical and fundamental component of a healthy and stable democratic system, signaling the public's collective confidence in the system's capacity to provide good governance, uphold the rule of law, and respond to the needs of society. The relevance of high levels of political trust cannot be overstated; it is intrinsically linked to a range of positive democratic outcomes. These include increased public participation in the political sphere, greater public approval of government spending, broad support for public policies, higher levels of voter turnout in elections, and increased compliance with the law [3].

Conversely, a crisis of trust in individual public officials will inevitably lead to a broader decline in trust in the institutions they represent. The erosion of trust is therefore not only a challenge, but also a potential weakening of the democratic order and a precursor to wider social instability. The function of trust as a "democratic thermometer" suggests that if trust is a necessary condition for this vital democratic process to be effective, then a trust "deficit" is not just a negative outcome, but a strong predictor of democratic dysfunction and potential instability. This can lead to more transactional or protest-oriented forms of political engagement than those rooted in civic trust and cooperation.

While national trends clearly indicate a significant institutional trust deficit among Generation Z, who are heavily influenced by their digital political culture, the specific manifestations and implications of this complex phenomenon in the local context of the local elections in Singaraja City remain largely unexplored. Singaraja, as a distinct local entity with its unique socio-cultural fabric and historical background, offers an interesting microcosm where national trends can interact with specific local dynamics, historical legacies, and nuanced voter candidate interactions [4].

A large youth demographic in active participation and trust becomes a fundamental basis for the legitimacy and effectiveness of local elections. Despite the KPU's laudable efforts to optimize the participation of first-time voters in Singaraja through various socialization programs, the granular factors that drive trust or institutional deficits, particularly among Generation Z in their digital political culture in this specific local context, are not yet well understood [5].

This sharp contrast highlights that national trends, while informative, may not fully capture the unique nuances and dynamics at the local level. Local political culture, historical context, specific local issues, and direct interactions between local political actors and Generation Z can significantly alter how broader trends manifest. A study focusing specifically on Singaraja will provide uniquely invaluable insights into how global and national digital political cultures and institutional trust issues interact with local socio cultural particularities, historical heritage, and local political dynamics that differ from regional elections. This localized perspective is critical as it can lead to the development of highly targeted and effective interventions, political education programs, and communication strategies tailored to increase youth political participation and rebuild trust in local governance, moving beyond generalized national findings that may not be applicable or effective in diverse regional contexts. The objectives of this study are: (a) describe the level of institutional trust (government/regional heads, political parties, election organizers) among Gen Z of Singaraja City; (b) analyze how digital political culture including social media usage, digital literacy, and exposure to online campaigns influence Gen Z's political attitudes and trust; (c) identify the implications of the findings for effective political socialization strategies and digital campaigns going forward.

2 Method

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study research design. This method was selected to obtain a comprehensive picture of the phenomenon of institutional trust deficit and Gen-Z's digital political culture at the time of local government elections in Singaraja City. The research location focuses on Singaraja City, Bali as urban area representation with relevant local political dynamics and an adequate number of Generation Z population. The choice of location provides access to an in-depth exploration of how digital factors interrelate with political trust locally, which is greatly unaccounted for by parallel studies. Participants in this study are Generation Z individuals who are eligible voters and actively utilize digital platforms for information seeking or political engagement, along with key actors in local political institutions-political party representatives, members of the local KPU, and community leaders having influence on or involvement in the Pilkada process in Singaraja City.

To obtain a comprehensive and holistic picture in this study, three main data collection techniques were used: In-depth interviews, Participatory Observation, and Document Analysis. Structured and Flexible Conversations with research subjects were applied to elicit their perceptions, experiences, and views relating to political trust, digital media utilization, and participation in local elections. Nuances that would not be revealed through quantitative surveys can be captured in-depth interviews emphasize contemporary qualitative studies. Researchers perform relevant activities or forums falling under the digital political culture of Generation Z such as online discussions, social media campaigns, or public meetings on local elections in the city of Singaraja, thus presenting an opportunity for direct observation of the interactions, behaviors, and dynamics that take place both in the digital realm as well as outside it.

This stage consists of reviewing miscellaneous official and unofficial documents about Pilkada, Generation Z, and Institutional Trust. The documents that would be put to analysis include voter demographic data from KPU Buleleng, policy reports in relation to the election, online mass media publication concerning local issues, and relevant digital content such as social media posts, political memes, or online discussion reflecting the view of Generation Z. The document analysis is meant to triangulate interview and observation data with an understanding of the formal background against which practical implementation takes place; thus, it follows best practice for qualitative research. Therefore, to obtain a comprehensive

and in-depth data analysis, this study applied the interactive data analysis model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana [6]. This model is a dynamic and iterative framework, allowing the researcher to continuously move between the stages of data collection, simplification, presentation, and inference, ensuring the validity and reliability of the findings [6]. This research ensures that data is interpreted thoroughly and validly, with a verification process inherent in each step, including triangulation of data from multiple sources and techniques to enhance the credibility of the results.

3 Results and Discussion

This study describes how the digital political landscape frames perceptions as well as levels of trust toward political institutions among Generation Z in Singaraja City; identification of forms of digital political culture among Generation Z in the context of local elections in Singaraja City and their impacts on political participation; supporting and inhibiting factors that may work in rebuilding institutional trust amidst massive flows of digital information among Generation Z in Singaraja City.

3.1 The Influence of Digital Political Landscape and Generation Z's Perceived Trust in Political Institutions in Singaraja City

The digital political landscape has fundamentally shifted in Indonesia, making social media the main playing field of political talk and sharing among the people, mostly youths. The digital era breaks the walls of time and space; thus, information can be quickly attained and direct interactions between politicians and the public can take place, thereby changing the structure of political communication. The utilization of social media as a means of reaching out to the younger generation at democratic events, as seen in the 2024 elections, is clear evidence of this shift.



Fig. 1. Social Media Logos with Illustrations of Generation Z Involved in Digital Politics.

Digital platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok have become effective channels for young people to express political views, access information, and engage in decision-making (Figure 1). This change is not only limited to the adoption of new tools, but also creates a habitus and style of politics that is more contemporary and practical, in accordance with the tendencies of Generation Z. This transformation shows that digital platforms not only add new channels, but also fundamentally change the structure of political communication, reducing the control of traditional gatekeepers such as mainstream media or

party hierarchies over information flows. This more direct interaction, while increasing dialog, also means fewer information filters, which can have a significant impact on the quality and veracity of information consumed by Generation Z, and in turn, affect their level of trust.

Generation Z, defined as individuals born between 1997 and 2012, is a group that is highly attached to the internet and digital technology, making them active users of digital communication platforms [7]. Their communication patterns tend to be visual, and they show a strong interest in social and environmental issues. Great potential for Generation Z in reengineering the political dynamics of Indonesia is driven by technological prowess and online political activism. While they are less involved in traditional forms of political participation, they have shifted the locus of their engagement to new media-social media-articulating their political aspirations. Therefore, the shift is insightful; thus, apathy does not emanate from a lack of interest in politics but rather a transformation in the mode of engagement. Generation Z shows greater interest in practical politics, such as party membership or candidacy for elective positions. Their participation falls within personalized 'issue' contexts and non-hierarchical structures that permit the fusion of acts of participation with lifestyles. Their preference for digital, issue-based and non-hierarchical engagement means that traditional political participation metrics may not fully capture their true level of engagement.

Generation Z's perceived trust in political institutions in the digital age is heavily influenced by the dynamics of online information. While digital media offer great opportunities for voter education and effective political campaigns, they are also faced with significant challenges such as the spread of false information (hoaxes) and hate speech. Data shows that most young voters in Indonesia have been exposed to false information related to politics through social media. The level of public trust in the political system and government greatly affects participation levels; if the system is perceived to be unfair, corrupt or unrepresentative of them, engagement tends to decline. Surveys of public satisfaction with public services, which include transparency and accountability, are key to increasing trust in government agencies.

Table 1 summarizes Generation Z's negative perceptions of political institutions and their unmet expectations, which contribute to the trust deficit.

Table 1. Generation Z's Perception and Expectations of Political Institutions

Aspects	Perception of Generation Z	Expectations of Generation Z	Gap
Integrity & Accountability	Less responsive, involved in violations, bad image	Demands high transparency and accountability	The institution is considered not in line with the expected integrity standards
Relevance	The political process is "outdated" and irrelevant to their needs	Engagement is driven by personal and social issues, such as the environment and equality	Institutions do not provide a space for participation that is relevant or centered on the issues they care about

Based on Table 1, maintaining integrity, transparency, and inclusivity in the use of social media in political contexts is very important to maintain a healthy democracy and build trust. There is a dilemma here: the same platforms that allow for greater transparency and direct communication also facilitate the rapid spread of trust-destroying content. The challenge for political institutions is not just to be present online, but also to actively fight disinformation and demonstrate verifiable transparency to reduce the risks inherent in the digital information environment, thereby building genuine trust.

This suggests that political institutions in Singaraja City should enhance their strategies for engaging Generation Z at the digital political landscape. Optimizing digital communication channels by the younger generation to consolidate democracy requires education about digital literacy which means training people on how to critically access, evaluate and create content digitally. Political communication has to optimize understanding Gen Z's motivations and values responding to these factors that trigger their political participation, personal characteristics as well as social environment. There should be more creative and discussion spaces for the younger generation in Buleleng which makes familiarization with modern communication technologies natural and inculcates sensitivity toward social problems. Pancasila-based political communication reflecting social justice, togetherness and unity, and the principles of democracy should be institutionalized through media as healthy and responsible political education to strengthen trust. Having an online presence does not suffice; institutions must actively invest in, and foster critical digital literacy which involves authentic two-way dialog platforms between themselves and the public ensuring their digital communications are ethical and values-driven. Hence, an effective digital strategy not only has a tactical approach toward reaching out to voters but also focuses on forging strong relationships that will increase trust in the overall democratic process by turning digital presence into a real partnership with Generation Z.

3.2 Identifying Forms of Generation Z's Digital Political Culture and its Impact on Political Participation in Singaraja City

Generation Z, defined as individuals born between 1997 and 2012, is a group that has grown up fully immersed in the digital age. It is through information technology and social media that they have known to relate to the world, even in the political context. For this generation, digital platforms are far from being an added surface of communication but rather represent the main milieu of getting information and participating in public discourse. This is evidenced by their preference for visual and audio-visual content; short videos, political memes, and humor which they consider easier to understand and more interesting than traditional sources of news. The change is one from passive consumption of news to very active and entertaining forms that fit their digital lifestyle.

The other salient aspect of the digital political culture of Gen Z is their super-consciousness about social issues, human rights, the environment, and gender equality. This occupies them mostly; hence, when they engage in political participation digitally, it is participation on these issues. They prefer to participate in matters that concern them personally or socially rather than about institutions or formal processes. This proves that Gen Z's digital political culture in Singaraja transcends just mere formal participation inclined toward using the digital platform as a means of advocacy and expression on particular issues they deem important. Thus, formally institutionalized local political institutes have to shift the communication focus from delivering programs to opening up more relevant dialogues regarding all these interest issues with Generation Z and open up non-formal channels for issue-centric participation.

Gen Z is active on social media but their political information consumption is incidental and they have a short attention span, estimated at about eight seconds [3]. This puts a heavy burden on the providers of political information-government and parties to provide content that is not only very concise but accurate and trustworthy amidst a torrent of unverified information. The recognition of Gen Z as potential agents of change can be seen in the efforts made in sensitizing them to social issues and also providing discussion space for critical ideas and policies happening in Singaraja and Buleleng Regency. There is, therefore, a call for innovative political communication strategies from government and political parties within Singaraja that shall be able to package complex information into simple, visual, and engaging

formats suited to the preferences of Generation Z while proactively building and maintaining credibility to counter disinformation and hoaxes.

Generation Z not only consumes political content, but is also active in producing and disseminating content, including memes, political humor, and educational content. They utilize popular hashtags and interact with local *influencers* to spread messages and viralize certain issues [8]. The digital age has changed the way people communicate and engage in political dialogue, allowing Generation Z to participate in online discussions, provide comments, and interact in various information without time constraints [9]. In Buleleng, efforts to facilitate the discussion of social issues for Generation Z have also been made. This shows that Generation Z's digital political culture in Singaraja covers a broad spectrum of participation, from mere information consumption to content production and issue advocacy. Their participation is not only passive but also active, although the level of depth can vary from "*clicktivism*" to more substantial engagement. The government and political parties in Singaraja should understand this spectrum of digital participation, not only providing information but also facilitating spaces for Generation Z to create, discuss and actively channel their aspirations through digital content, recognizing that participation is not always formal.

Predominantly digital does not mean Gen Z in Singaraja is not also involved in the formal structure of politics by becoming a success team, KPPS/PPS/Bawaslu member, or even political party member. Some do this because the family factors influence them or due to government recruitment. They still get more information about candidates and the electoral process through social media [10]. This shows how much, deep to what extent, digital has gotten into every facet of their political participation.

Table 2. Results of the Survey of Youth and Women who have been involved as KPPS/PPS/Bawaslu

Initial Respondents	Age	Gender	Formal Political Involvement	Engagement Driving Factors	Sources of Political Information	Important Notes
AR	23	Male	KPPS Members	Village government recruitment	Social media (Instagram, WhatsApp)	Admitting that he was initially not interested, but motivated because of his peers
NM	22	Female	Village PPS	Family encouragement (father is active in the politics)	Facebook & TikTok	Trust more in digital information than face-to-face socialization
GD	25	Male	Bawaslu Volunteers	Direct recruitment by the sub-district committee	WhatsApp Group & Online news portal	Emphasizing the importance of digital literacy in avoiding hoaxes
KS	21	Female	KPPS	Invitation to friends of the youth organization	Instagram & Twitter (X)	Participation is more in the administrative aspect, but still active discussions on social media

DW	24	Male	Political party volunteers	Family networks within the party	TikTok & YouTube	Feel that social media is more effective in reaching young voters
AY	22	Female	Village PPS	Invitation of village officials	Instagram Stories & WhatsApp	Think social media is quicker to provide info than formal meetings
MR	23	Male	KPPS Members	Personal initiative (new experience)	Facebook & WhatsApp	Assessing formal involvement is useful for adding social relations

Also, thru digital communication channels, Generation Z can easily express their views on politics, advocacy for the fulfillment of their wishes, and issues related to social and environmental matters to which they want to advocate. This offers them a channel of expression that can be very handy since it does not require going through the traditional channel of participation on issues that are more personally or socially oriented where action on their personal cause is regarded as a 'political act'. Gen Z digital political participation in Singaraja is not limited to the traditional act of voting but has shifted into functional participation, issue-centric. They use digital platforms as tools for the achievement of personal or social goals they might consider as forms of politics, such as issue advocacy or policy change. Thus, there should be a mechanism for digital participation that would give an avenue to properly channel their advocacy on issues Gen Z discovered not only through the ballot box but include continuous dialogs and feedback loops on the issues they discover through social media.

The political local institutions of Singaraja and Buleleng Regency have proven great efforts to adjust the digital climate in getting the engagement of Generation Z. The Government of Buleleng Regency (Pemkab Buleleng) and DPRD Buleleng possess official accounts at a number of social media applications among Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and TikTok. Even the District Court at Singaraja has such digital presence within these channels. This multi-platform presence reflects an understanding on how crucial it is to find young audiences where they are most active.

In order to socialize and provide political education to millennials and Generation Z, the National and Political Unity Agency (Kesbangpol) Buleleng keeps running programs. This will help build up political awareness as well as participation by equipping them not to fall for hoaxes easily on social media- since most of the hoaxes are found on this platform. It will also equip them not to be easily instigated by hoaxes that are widely circulated on social media. The Buleleng General Election Commission (KPU) has also reminded political parties about optimizing information technology during the party registration and verification process. This indicates a multi-layered or pluralistic ecosystem of different forms of political education existing in Buleleng/Singaraja involving government, KPU, political parties, and educational institutions. Collaboration among these actors when optimized can create greater synergy holistically improving Generation Z's political literacy and participation. Thus, to increase effectiveness of political institutions in Singaraja, cross-sector collaboration between the government, political parties, educational institutions as well as youth organizations should be strengthened in organizing coordinated and relevant digital literacy

and political education programs through various digital channels of interest to Generation Z focusing on building smart voters.

Adaptive and innovative political communication strategies must be continuously engineered by political parties and the government. Such a strategy encompasses the use of attractive visual and interactive content collaboration with relevant *influencers*, and infusion of Pancasila values into political messages so as to dampen polarization and prioritize unity. Though digital participation is highly prioritized, an effort should be initiated that will inspire Generation Z to participate in concrete actions outside organizations because such participation would multiply the effect that comes from them and prevent *slacktivism* so that their online engagement translates into real action toward society. The digital political participation of Generation Z in Singaraja is not just demographic numbers but a direct reflection of the health and responsiveness of the local democratic system. The power to truly involve and empower this generation by political institutions will determine the future path of democratic consolidation. The government and political institutions in Singaraja should perceive the digital political participation of Generation Z not simply as a population to be counted, but rather as an essential indicator that speaks to the levels of responsiveness and inclusiveness in the local political system. Such strategies should reorient toward empowering Generation Z to become real agents of change rather than just recipients of information or passive voters for sustainable democratic consolidation in Singaraja.

3.3 Supporting and Hindering Factors in Rebuilding Institutional Trust among Generation Z in Singaraja City

Generation Z, defined as individuals who are intrinsically connected to digital technology (*digital natives*) and have grown up in an information-rich environment and social media. These characteristics make them a highly influential demographic in political and social dynamics, including in Singaraja City, Buleleng Regency. Nationally, this group is a dominant electoral force, accounting for approximately 27.94% of Indonesia's total population and is even projected to account for 56% of voters in Bali's regional elections [11]. Their strong attachment to the internet and social media fundamentally shapes the way they communicate, obtain information, and form their political views. They are known to be critical thinkers, open to different views, tolerant, and have the ability to *multitask*.

Nonetheless, survey data shows significant optimism among Generation Z towards politics, with 77.5% nationally expressing confidence that their participation can contribute to the formulation of public policy in Indonesia. Their enthusiasm for the 2024 General Election was also recorded to be high, reaching 87% in some surveys, and the majority (88.78%) even expressed their intention to exercise their voting rights. In Buleleng, there have been efforts to encourage Generation Z to be more sensitive to local social issues and provide space for them to discuss for regional development. Their level of satisfaction with government performance also tends to be high, with 81.7% of Generation Z nationally satisfied with President Prabowo's performance and 70.4% satisfied with the performance of the Joko Widodo-Ma'ruf Amin administration. This phenomenon suggests a fundamental shift in their political participation paradigm. While they show enthusiasm in exercising their right to vote and following political news, their interest in engaging in conventional political roles, such as becoming a member of a political party (8.7%) or a politician (6.9%), is still relatively low. This does not mean that they are apathetic, but rather that their political engagement is transforming, mediated more by digital channels and driven by specific issues they care about, often outside of traditional hierarchical political structures. Therefore, institutions looking to rebuild trust must understand and adapt to Generation Z's digital and issue-oriented political culture.

Apart from the local government, political parties in Buleleng also embraced vast digital strategies. These included PDI Perjuangan, Gerindra, Golkar, PAN, and PKS. Social media used for political campaigns and positive imaging as well direct communication to young voters- emphasize the values of Pancasila in the strength of trust towards democracy being built. According to research results, it is revealed that digital campaigns through Instagram have a strong and significant influence on political participation. Effective digital campaign strategies for Generation Z involve the use of engaging visual content, utilization of popular *hashtags*, collaboration with local *influencers*, and provision of educational online portals. Buleleng's National and Political Unity Agency (Kesbangpol) has also encouraged digital transformation to improve the quality of services for community organizations and political parties, with the hope that digital service applications can simplify the registration and reporting process.

Several studies have also observed the low level of traditional political participation by Generation Z, due to hectic lifestyles, as well as the lack of knowledge about civic responsibilities, and because they view current political processes as "outdated" [3]. Another major barrier to building trust is having negative perceptions related to political institutions. For example, the House of Representatives (DPR) has a terrible image among Generation Z due to cases of misconduct against public issues and also not being responsive as well as being distant from their needs and aspirations. If there is no transparency or if political scandals arise, the legitimacy of political parties will significantly diminish in the eyes of Generation Z. This group places a high demand for transparency and accountability in politics. They want to see clearly what the political policies are, what resources are being used, and the integrity of candidates and political parties. This gap shows where Gen Z's hopes miss the mark of the true nature of institutions. They are not cold toward politics itself, but since the usual steps and groups seem to many as useless, slow to act, or low on honor they do not match their high hopes for honest and fair rule.

To effectively rebuild institutional trust among Generation Z in Singaraja, an integrated and highly adaptive strategic approach is required. This demands "*Hybrid Governance*" and "*Authentic Responsiveness*." (1) institutions must move from a passive digital presence to interactive and transparent communication. This means leveraging social media for two-way dialog, not just one-way information dissemination. It is important to provide clear channels for input and feedback, and transparently demonstrate how such input is considered and integrated in policy formulation. (2) Digital literacy programs should be massively strengthened, not only to identify hoaxes but also to foster critical thinking and the ability to analyze information in depth, possibly through strategic partnerships with youth organizations and educational institutions. (3) institutions need to proactively create relevant and engaging participation spaces for Generation Z, both online and offline. These spaces should focus on social and environmental issues that are of primary concern to them, as well as provide clear pathways for digital activism to influence real policy. (4) Increased institutional accountability and transparency through good governance practices and responsiveness to public issues are essential to prove the credibility and integrity of [12]. Thus, trust is not only built through effective communication, but also through concrete actions that align with Generation Z's values and expectations of honest and fair governance, and are able to bring the change they expect [13].

4 Conclusion

This study concludes that Generation Z in Singaraja City demonstrates a marked deficit of institutional trust despite their active engagement in digital political discourse, fulfilling the research objective of analyzing the link between digital political culture and political attitudes. The findings reveal that their visual, issue-centered, and authenticity-driven

political culture contrasts sharply with the one-way communication style of formal institutions, a dissonance further deepened by the spread of misinformation. This gap underlies the ongoing trust crisis, underscoring the urgent need for political institutions to adopt hybrid governance models that are dialogical, responsive, and transparent. Practically, the study recommends strengthening digital literacy programs, enhancing participatory spaces, and fostering authentic institutional engagement to rebuild trust and promote democratic resilience. Future research should extend these insights by employing quantitative approaches on a broader scale to test generalizability, conducting longitudinal studies to track changes in perception post-election, and comparing urban and rural youth to better inform inclusive policy interventions.

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