

FROM TIMELINE TO PUBLIC SPHERE: SOCIAL MEDIA NEWS CONSUMPTION AND YOUTH POLITICAL EXPRESSION AMONG YOUTH

R. Yogie Prawira¹, Nifta Alifatul Khotijah², Zuhairi Sanofi³, Sukron Mazid⁴

^{1,2}Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Tidar University / Sidotopo Campus: Jl. Barito 1 No. 2, Kedungsari, North Magelang District, Magelang City, Central Java 59155

³Komisi Pemilihan Umum Kota Sungai Penuh: Jl. Pancasila, Lawang Agung, Pondok Tinggi, Sungai Penuh City, Jambi 37111

⁴Faculty of Education and Teacher Training, Tidar University / Tuguran Campus: Jl. Kapten Suparman No. 39, Potrobangsari, North Magelang District, Magelang City, Central Java 56116
E-mail: yogieprawira@untidar.ac.id; niftakhotijah@untidar.ac.id; zuhairi.sanofi@gmail.com; sukronmazid@untidar.ac.id

ABSTRACT

The growing prevalence of social media as a source of news consumption has significant implications for political expression among youth. This study examines the impact of news consumption on political expression among young social media users in Indonesia. Using a quantitative approach, data were collected from 228 respondents through a structured questionnaire and analyzed using linear regression. The result suggested that news consumption on social media has a positive effect on users' political expression, although with a relatively small effect size (7.3%). It affirms the relevance of the relationship between news consumption on social media, but the small effect indicates an anomaly. There are some possibilities that may become barriers, such as the existence of the ITE Law, which regulates the use of information technology, political efficacy, communication competence, social environment, and individual motivation in shaping political expression. The influence of these factors may differ across various social media platforms and contexts, necessitating further comprehensive research to fully comprehend political expression in the digital era. The diversity of platforms and different contexts are important aspect for conducting more in-depth research to obtain a comprehensive understanding of political expression in different digital eras. Limitations of this study include an unrepresentative sample and potential bias in the self-reported measurement of political expression. Future research is recommended to employ more representative samples and integrate content analysis with questionnaires to obtain more accurate data on this phenomenon.

Keywords: digital; news consumption; political expression; social media; youth

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ABSTRAK

Meningkatnya prevalensi media sosial sebagai sumber konsumsi berita memiliki implikasi signifikan terhadap ekspresi politik di kalangan generasi muda. Studi ini meneliti pengaruh konsumsi berita melalui media sosial terhadap ekspresi politik pada generasi muda pengguna media sosial di Indonesia. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif, data dikumpulkan dari 228 responden melalui kuesioner terstruktur dan dianalisis menggunakan regresi linier. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa konsumsi berita di media sosial secara berpengaruh positif pada ekspresi politik pengguna, meskipun dengan besaran pengaruh yang relatif kecil (7,3%). Penelitian ini mengonfirmasi relevansi hubungan antara konsumsi berita di media sosial, namun pengaruh yang kecil menunjukkan anomali bahwa ada interaksi yang kompleks atau faktor-faktor lain yang menjadi hambatan. Adanya UU ITE yang mengatur tentang pemanfaatan teknologi informasi dapat menjadi salah satu faktornya, selain faktor efikasi politik, kompetensi komunikasi, lingkungan sosial, motivasi individu dalam menstimulus ekspresi politik. Keragaman platform dan konteks yang berbeda menjadi aspek yang penting untuk melakukan penelitian lebih mendalam sehingga diperoleh pemahaman yang komprehensif mengenai ekspresi politik di era digital yang berbeda. Keterbatasan penelitian ini mencakup sampel yang tidak representatif, dan potensi bias pada pengukuran ekspresi politik yang dilaporkan secara mandiri. Penelitian selanjutnya disarankan untuk menggunakan sampel yang lebih representatif dan data mengombinasikan dengan analisis konten dengan kuesioner guna memperoleh data yang lebih akurat sesuai dengan fenomena ini.

Kata kunci: digital; konsumsi berita; ekspresi politik; media sosial; generasi muda

INTRODUCTION

Social media plays a central role in shaping the dynamics of digital communication (Vilkaite-Vaitone, 2024). Within the realm of state affairs, social media serve as a pivotal platform contributing to the development of democracy (Bravo & Valle, 2017). Social media facilitates citizens to access and seek information (Asimakopoulos et al., 2025). Social media has emerged as a prominent source of political news, surpassing traditional media such as radio or television (de Zúñiga et al., 2014).

According to a national survey conducted in October 2024, social media has become the primary source of information for Indonesians. Social media dominates public preferences, with 89% of respondents comparing it to other media, such as television, radio, and print media (DataIndonesia.Id, 2024). Data released by DataIndonesia.id indicates a shift in news consumption behaviour toward digital media, particularly social media.

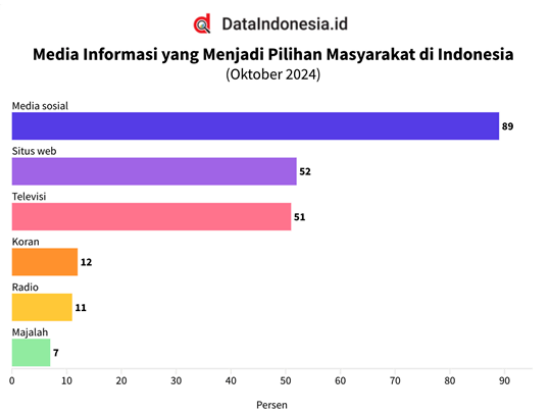


Figure 1. Indonesian’s Informational Media Preferences

Source: (<https://dataindonesia.id/varia/detail/hasil-survei-media-informasi-yang-menjadi-pilihan-masyarakat-di-indonesia>)

The data above align with official reports released by GoodStats (2025) showing that online and social media are the public's primary news sources. Television and print media occupied the third and fourth positions. Both figures illustrate a significant congruence, reinforcing the reliability of the shifted trend on information consumption patterns in Indonesia. It suggests that the process of seeking, receiving, and interpreting political information is increasingly dependent on a fast, personal, and interactive digital ecosystem (Noorikhshan et al.,

2023). News consumption via social media is no longer a separate activity from daily life but is integrated into routine digital platform use.

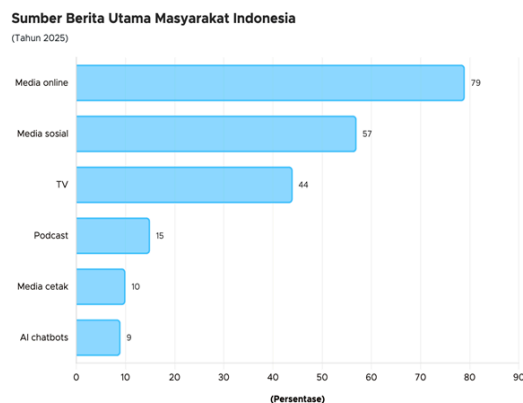


Figure 2. Indonesian’s Primary News Sources

Sources: (<https://data.goodstats.id/statistic/simak-sumber-utama-publik-indonesia-dalam-mencari-berita-2025-7TOae>)

Social media news consumption refers to the practice of accessing, reading, and engaging with news content through various social media platforms. This phenomenon has become increasingly common as social networking sites have evolved into important channels for news dissemination and consumption (Bergström & Belfrage, 2018; Veronika & Raharjo, 2021).

However, news consumption behaviour on social media is not always intentional. It can be intentional, driven by individual will, or it can occur unintentionally due to an algorithm's effect. It is aligned with research conducted by Swart (2021), who stated that social media users, especially the younger generation, often experience incidental exposure to political news. This occurs when information appears on their timelines as a result of algorithmic curation based on interaction history, social networks, and previous preferences.

Through this personalisation mechanism, algorithms function as selection gates that determine the visibility and frequency of political news, even when users are not actively seeking it. It results in passive and habitual news consumption. This consumption pattern, which combines active search and passive exposure, gradually shapes users' political understanding and influences their orientation toward public issues (Matthes et al., 2020).

Thus, social media news consumption is a hybrid process determined not only by individual intentions but also by the ongoing interaction between user behaviour and the platform's algorithmic logic. Through algorithmic mechanisms, social media platforms regulate the flow of information, which then shapes users' news consumption patterns.

Political news appears simultaneously in users' timelines alongside entertainment content and social interactions, creating repeated exposure to political issues. Under these circumstances, the acquisition of political knowledge depends not only on individual intentions but also on the platform structure and dynamics of the social network (Nanz et al., 2022).

These findings align with research conducted by Zempi et al. (2023), which confirms that social media plays a crucial role in shaping public political knowledge. Social media functions not only as a source of information but also as a space for political discussion and network formation. Through repeated information consumption, individuals process various political contents into subjective and contextual political knowledge. It is tailored to their background, literacy level, and political orientations.

The study also identified three main mechanisms explaining how consuming political information on social media stimulates political expression: involvement, connection, and mobilisation. First, the involvement aspect indicates that intense exposure to political information on social media increases individuals' cognitive and affective engagement with political issues. Individuals who are regularly exposed to political news tend to have higher issue awareness, which is a prerequisite for the construction of political attitudes and preferences.

Second, the connection aspect emphasises the role of social media in building political networks. Consumption of political information occurs in the context of social interaction, where individuals not only receive information but also compare, discuss, and negotiate political meaning with their networks. These networks serve as a source of social legitimacy that strengthens individual beliefs and fosters the courage to express political views, especially when those views align with group norms.

Third, the mobilisation aspect explains the advanced stage. Political knowledge and engagement constructed through social media is

potentially to develop into expressive action. Political expression may manifest as giving opinions, sharing political content, showing support for specific actors or issues, and participating in online political discussions. This reiterates that social media serves as a crucial prerequisite for political expression. However, it does not deterministically lead to homogenous political participation in the digital public sphere.

Individuals who engage with political content on social media not only shape their political perceptions but also tend to express their political views to their immediate social circles or networks (Harff & Schmuck, 2025). Political expression refers to the act of communicating one's political views, opinions, and ideas through various means and forms of digital communication (Hopp et al., 2025).

Political expression, encompassing opinions, comments, or re-sharing political content, represents an initial step for citizens to engage in the political process (Weeks et al., 2024). It is a fundamental aspect of political communication and plays a crucial role in shaping public discourse and participation in the political process. In the context of the digital era, political expression has taken on a new dimension.

While the scholarly definition of political expression varies, it is crucial to synthesise prominent definitions of political expression. Dahl (1915) views political expression as a fundamental element of democracy. It is the ability of citizens to freely express their views, interests, and political preferences in the public sphere. Political expression, within this framework, is understood as a communicative act that enables the exchange of ideas and the formation of public opinion.

Zuniga et al. (2014) expands this definition by arguing that political expression is a set of online communicative behaviours, including the expression of political opinions, digital political affiliation, and the distribution and amplification of political content through social media. Meanwhile, Lane et al. (2019) challenges this definition by arguing that political expression is a psychological identity dimension known as the political self. Political expression is not understood solely as a communicative act, but rather as a process of self-representation that reflects an individual's psychological involvement in political life. The definitional divergence is further reflected in the distinct dimensions identified by these scholars.

Dahl (1915) proposed three dimensions of political expression: a) openly expressing political opinions, b) criticising public policies and political actors, and c) active participation in public discourse as part of the democratic process.

Zuniga et al. (2014) broadens the dimension of political expression into five dimensions, 1) expression of personal political opinion, including posting political experiences, views, or thoughts on social media, 2) political interaction and discussion, including exchanging opinions about elections, candidates, and political issues online (comments or private messages), 3) digital political affiliation, including following the social media accounts of political figures, activists, or observers, 4) distribution of political content, including sharing politically relevant news, photos, videos, or audio, and 5) amplification of the expression of others, including forwarding political comments or statements from figures or other individuals on social media.

In contrast, the dimension offered by Lane et al. (2019) reflects on how individuals interpret and present themselves as political subjects in the public sphere. The political self encompasses several key aspects: 1) Self-perception as an individual who cares about and is interested in political issues, 2) The courage to openly display political identity and attitudes in the public sphere, particularly in the context of digital media, and 3) Consistency between internal political orientation and the form of political expression presented to the public.

This study adopts the concept proposed by Zuniga because these dimensions are no longer limited to conventional public spaces but have expanded into online spaces. It ensured a robust operationalisation of political expression in the online media context, which provides faster, broader, and more interactive means of communication.

It enables individuals to express their political views instantly and reach a larger audience. Thus, political expression is a communicative act that maintains its deliberative principles but operates within a digital communication ecosystem characterised by the speed of information flow, connected networks, and high intensity of interaction (de Zúñiga et al., 2014).

It supports the statement that social media facilitates political participation and expression, particularly in the context of a society that relies on digital platforms as its primary source

of political news. Angier Tom, in his research, also reveals that that social media news consumption is positively related to online political expression in China (Zhou & Lu, 2023).

However, A cross-national survey study in the United States, the United Kingdom, and France found different results that the relationship between online news consumption and online political expression is conditional and influenced by demographic factors, particularly age (Boulianne & Shehata, 2022). It discloses that although younger generations consume online news more intensively and are more active in expressing political views online, the relationship between news consumption and political expression weakens in older age groups.

In fact, in older generations, online news consumption does not always lead to increased political expression, but tends to be passive or limited to information consumption. These findings indicate that social media news consumption does not automatically encourage political expression but is influenced by civic norms, political interests, and social characteristics of users (Boulianne, 2015; Zhou & Lu, 2023).

The literature demonstrates a contradictory finding. On the one hand, social media news consumption strengthens political expression, while on the other hand, it can be limited or even ineffective in encouraging political expression in particular groups. It is noteworthy that political expression on social media requires public commitment to political self-presentation, which encourages individuals to view themselves as politically active, interested, efficacious, and knowledgeable (Lane et al., 2019).

Karpouzis et al. (2022) elaborated on the social media impact on political expression and the transformation of news consumption and commentary in the digital age. The recent studies added that the consumption and distribution of political information on social media in Indonesia not only opens up space for political expression but also reinforces polarisation and creates a repressive communication climate against freedom of expression (Bahri et al., 2025).

It highlights that social media initially provided a new space for citizens to express political views quickly and broadly; in fact, this space has evolved into an arena for intense discursive conflict, particularly during electoral political moments. Polarisation, reinforced by

algorithms and confirmation bias, has fragmented public opinion and narrowed the space for rational dialogue. Furthermore, the study confirms that political polarisation on social media is correlated with increased self-censorship (Chan & Yi, 2024; Ferreira & Ferreira, 2025; Ali & Eriyanto, 2021).

The unclear boundary between legitimate political criticism and violations of the law, particularly in the implementation of the Electronic Information and Transactions Law (UU ITE), creates legal uncertainty that directly impacts the expressive behaviour of social media users. In this situation, intense consumption of political news can actually trigger a fear of isolation. It can be characterised as a fear of social and legal sanctions, leading individuals to choose to restrain or limit their political expression in the digital public sphere (Afisa et al., 2024; Feka et al., 2025).

Interestingly, the study by Bahri et al. (2025) reveals a paradoxical outcome. While it confirms that political news consumption has the potential to increase political knowledge and awareness, which are theoretically prerequisites for political expression, it simultaneously indicates a polarisation and a fear of isolation in social media due to inconsistent law enforcement. Thus, political news consumption on social media does not always lead to increased political expression. Yet conversely, it can transform into a mechanism that reinforces polarisation and suppresses citizens' expressive participation.

Despite the consensus on the impact of political news consumption on social media, scholarly debate persists regarding the polarisation and fear of isolation on social media. This divergence of findings underscores the need for this study is to determine how social media news consumption influences the political expression of social media users in Indonesia. This study differs from previous studies that only focused on the news consumption behaviour of text-based social media such as Twitter and Facebook; this study also includes audio-

visual social media platforms such as TikTok and Instagram.

Furthermore, the focus of the research in Indonesia provides a unique perspective related to the existence of the ITE Law, which could be a factor that could potentially inhibit individuals from expressing their politics. Pang (2018) added that the digital era has changed the landscape of political communication by expanding individual access to political information and opportunities to express opinions among network connections. Referring to this statement, this study proposes hypothesis H1 that consumption of political news on social media has a positive effect on political expression. The study is crucial because political expression is considered a variable that can encourage individuals to participate in politics

METHOD

This study employed quantitative research methods aimed at explaining the causal relationships among the research variables. Variable's measurement using the Likert scale ranged from strongly agree (5), agree (4), neutral (3), disagree (2), to strongly disagree (1). The population was social media users. The G-Power application was used to determine the sample size. Based on the G-Power calculations, the minimum number of respondents was 80. However, this target was exceeded, resulting in 228 respondents. Data were collected through an online questionnaire (Microsoft Form) using a convenience sampling technique. After data collection, linear regression analysis was performed using SPSS version 27.

The measurement items used to measure social media news consumption were adapted from (Lu et al., 2020), while those used to measure political expression were adapted from (de Zúñiga et al., 2014). Some sentences were adjusted to ensure clarity and understanding for respondents. Reliability testing was then conducted on 99 respondents, with the following results.

Table 1. Measurement Items

Variables	Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Social Media News Consumption	I click on a link to politically related news on social media	0,702
	I get information about political events on social media	

Variables	Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Political Expression	I post personal experiences related to political issues or campaigns on social media	0,851
	I exchange opinions about elections, candidates, and political issues online	
	I make friends/follow politicians, activists, and political observers on social media	
	I post or share thoughts about politics on social media	
	I post or share news, photos, videos, or audio about politics	
	I forward political comments from other figures/people to others on social media	

Table 1 contains a series of items used to measure the two main constructs in this study, social media news consumption and political expression. These two variables are operationalised through several statements reflecting respondents' behaviour in accessing, receiving, and expressing political information through social media.

The social media news consumption variable is measured through two indicators assessing the extent to which respondents click on political news links and obtain information about political events through social media platforms. Reliability testing demonstrated a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.702, which signifies that both items have adequate internal consistency and meet the criteria for instrument suitability in social research.

The political expression variable is represented through six behavioural indicators, including posting political experiences, exchanging opinions on election issues and candidates, following political or activist accounts, and sharing and forwarding political content to other users. This variable achieved a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.851, indicating a very high level of reliability. This indicates that all items used consistently describe respondents' forms of political expression on social media.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The baseline socio-demographic characteristics of the 228 respondents are summarised in the following Table 2.

Table 2. Sociodemographic

Description	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
Gen Z (12-27 years old)	210	92,11%
Millennials (28-43 years old)	18	7,89%
Gender		
Woman	133	58,33%
Man	95	41,67%
Final Education		
High school graduates	191	83,77%
Bachelor's degree graduates	24	10,53%
Master's degree graduates	11	4,82%
Doctoral degree graduates	2	0,88%

Description	Frequency	Percentage
Work		
Student	202	88,60%
Employed	26	11,40%
Residence		
Small urban	156	68,42%
Urban	49	21,49%
Rural	23	10,09%
Most Frequently Accessed Social Media		
TikTok	91	39,91%
Instagram	63	27,63%
X	49	21,49%
WhatsApp	25	10,96%

Source: Primary Data (2024)

Table 3. Linear Regression Analysis

ANOVA					
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Itself.
Regression	360,063	1	360,063	17,859	,000b
Residual	4556,499	226	20,161		
Total	4916.561	227			

1. Dependent Variable: Political expression
2. Predictors: (Constant), Social media news consumption

The sample was predominantly Generation Z (12–27 years old) at 92.11%, with Millennials (28–43 years old) participants at only 7.89%. In terms of gender, respondents were predominantly female (58.33%), while males comprised 41.67%. In terms of educational attainment, the majority of respondents had a high school diploma (83.77%), followed by a bachelor's degree (10.53%), a master's degree (4.82%), and a doctoral degree (0.88%). Based on occupation, respondents were predominantly students (88.60%), while employees comprised 11.40%.

Based on residence, the majority of respondents came from Magelang (68.42%), with

other areas such as Temanggung, Bandung, Jakarta, Semarang, Yogyakarta, Malang, and several other cities each representing small proportions ranging from 0.44% to 5.26%. Overall, the sociodemographic composition indicates that this study primarily involved young respondents, students, and residents of the Magelang area.

To test the primary hypothesis, a linear regression analysis was conducted to examine the predictors of political expression. The overall model was statistically significant, as seen in the table below.

Table 4. Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R-Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	,271a	,073	,069	4,490

- 1) Dependent Variable: Political expression 2) Predictors: (Constant), Use of information

Table 4 presents a summary of the linear regression model used to explain the influence of information consumption on political expression. The correlation coefficient ($R = 0.271$) and the R-square value of 0.073 indicate that social media news consumption influenced respondents' political expression by 7.3%.

Based on the findings, this study shows that social media news consumption has a statistically significant influence on respondents' political expression. These findings confirm that although the relationship is statistically significant, the power of influence is not dominant. In other words, social media news consumption does play a role, but it is not the main determinant of the political expression of the younger generation. This finding supports the hypothesis that exposure to political information through digital platforms is an initial determinant that triggers individuals to participate in public discourse. However, the coefficient of determination indicates a weak effect.

The findings of this study show that news consumption through social media has an effect on the political expression of the younger generation, but with a relatively low level of influence. These results confirm that the relationship between exposure to political information and political expression is not linear. In the literature of digital political communication, social media is often positioned as a new form of public space that allows for broader and egalitarian participation (Ramlan et al., 2025). Through digital networks, individuals can produce, distribute, and comment on political information without going through the structure of mainstream media (Aidah et al., 2026). However, in the Indonesian context, it is worth considering that the transformation of public space is not only determined by technological infrastructure, but also by political culture, digital literacy levels, and applicable regulatory structures (Khotimah et al., 2025). The concept of a networked public sphere does emphasise the decentralisation of information, but it does not automatically guarantee the courage of individuals to express political attitudes openly (Rohmah & Meriwijaya, 2025).

This result reflects the phenomenon where high news consumption among Generation Z and college students does not automatically translate into massive expressive action, as they predominantly use TikTok and Instagram. There is a functional disconnect between the cognitive level, namely knowing the news, and

the conative level, namely voicing opinions, which is influenced by external factors beyond the research variables.

Conceptually, this can be explained through the cognitive mobilisation approach (Sinamo et al., 2025). Access to political information is indeed increasing through social media, but the increase in information is not always followed by an increase in expressive actions. The data of this study show that most respondents actively consume political news, but do not consistently express their views in the digital public space. Thus, news consumption functions more at the cognitive level, namely, increasing political information knowledge, than at the performative level. Thus, the findings of this study show that social media in Indonesia is more appropriately understood as an ambivalent public space, i.e. technologically open, but still bound by social norms and formal regulations (Tapotubun & Rahmah, 2021).

One fundamental argument to explain the low results of research regarding social media news consumption influencing respondents' political expression is the existence of legal structural barriers in Indonesia, particularly the Electronic Information and Transactions Law (UU ITE). As Bahri points out, inconsistent legal enforcement on social media creates a repressive communication climate for freedom of expression (Bahri et al., 2025; Limilia & Fuady, 2021). The unclear boundary between legitimate policy criticism and defamation offences creates what is known as a chilling effect.

In a study titled "Media Literacy, Chilling Effect, and Youth Political Participation", it was explained that there is a chilling effect of regulations that contain potential sanctions that can cause preventive self-restrictions (Limilia & Fuady, 2021). Although these variables were not directly measured in statistical models, the low value of the determination coefficient in this study indicates the presence of external factors that moderate the relationship between news consumption and political expression. Thus, the consumption of social media news does not fully develop into a public political expression, but rather stops at a limited level of knowledge and discussion. Individuals may not experience legal proceedings directly, but the existence of publicly exposed cases is enough to form a collective awareness that digital expression has legal consequences.

The low level of political expression can also be explained through the spiral theory of

silence. In the context of social media, individuals not only consider the opinion of the majority, but also take into account the potential social consequences of the expression conveyed (Mahardika et al., 2025). In the context of this study, the perception of these consequences is likely to be a mediating variable that explains the low transformation of news consumption into political expression. Younger generations may actively follow political issues, but opt for safer communication strategies, such as private discussions or non-explicit symbolic expressions (Katili et al., 2025).

Under these conditions, intense consumption of political news can actually trigger fear of isolation and concerns about legal sanctions. Respondents, the majority of whom were students, were likely to engage in self-censorship as a risk mitigation strategy. They chose to remain passive consumers or only express their political views to those closest to them or on social networks. They considered it safe rather than openly expressing them on public timelines. This aligns with previous research, which confirms that fear of social and legal sanctions is a major barrier to political expression on social media (Amelia, 2024; Weeks et al., 2024). In such a situation, the younger generation tends to make rational calculations. Based on research from Ryan Taufika in his book entitled "Gen-Z Political Literacy", Gen-Z will make rational calculations before making political expressions on social media, whether the expression is worth the social risks that may arise and threaten their safety or whether the expression has a positive impact on them (Taufik & Suryadi, 2025).

In addition to regulatory factors, low levels of political expression are also related to the user's psychological characteristics, known as the political self. Even though individuals are exposed to information, the courage to openly display their political identity and stance requires a high level of political conviction, or commonly called self-efficacy (Suciati & Nuqul, 2025). These political beliefs can come from internal or external sources. Internal beliefs are the beliefs from within that they are able to understand and participate in politics. While external beliefs are the beliefs that the political system or government is responsive to the demands of society. In the context of the results of this study, although the intensity of news consumption is quite high, the political expressions carried out by the respondents tend

to be limited and non-confrontational. This pattern indicates a limitation in the external political belief dimension, namely the belief that an individual's voice will be meaningfully responded to by his or her system or community. Without a sense of impact, political expression becomes less instrumentally relevant

In addition to regulatory factors, low levels of political expression are also related to users' psychological characteristics, known as the political self. Even though individuals are exposed to information, the courage to openly display their political identity and stances requires a high level of political efficacy. On platforms like TikTok and Instagram, algorithms often create echo chambers that limit interactions to like-minded groups, reducing the urgency for individuals to engage in cross-group political expression (Ahmmad et al., 2025; Barberá et al., 2015; Dubois et al., 2020). In addition, the character of the platform used by respondents also influenced these dynamics. TikTok and Instagram operate with engagement-based algorithms that tend to reinforce user preferences (Mubarak et al., 2025).

This research explains that social media does provide important prerequisites for political expression, but its power is limited by civic norms, political interest, and especially by a sense of legal security. Without guaranteed protection for freedom of expression, social media news consumption will remain limited to the level of knowledge, unable to encourage meaningful expressive participation for digital democracy in Indonesia. In addition to social risks, the regulatory context is also relevant in explaining the low power of the influence of news consumption on political expression (Dwiyanti et al., 2023). Public perception of the implementation of digital regulations in Indonesia has the potential to shape the perception that political expression in the digital space has legal consequences (Ridha et al., 2025)

In the context of this research, social media platforms facilitate the rapid and varied dissemination of information, so that social media news consumption plays a significant role in individual political expression, although its influence is not significant. These findings show that social media news consumption serves as a cognitive prerequisite for digital political participation (Wahid et al., 2025).

Gen-Z, who are more exposed to political information, have a greater chance of forming opinions and articulating them (Tinambunan et

al., 2024). However, the process of transformation from political news consumption to expression does not take place automatically; there are other factors that Gen-Z considers to do political expression (Qalbuadi et al., 2025). As de Zúñiga et al. (2014) noted, social media has become a source of political news compared to traditional media such as radio or television. Individuals who consume information from social media tend to express their political views to those closest to them (Geise et al., 2021; Su et al., 2022).

News media play a significant role in shaping readers' political expression by providing information, framing issues, and setting the agenda for public discourse (Safori et al., 2024). The media's presentation of events, policies, and political figures can influence readers' opinions, attitudes, and voting behaviour (Spirig, 2024). Media bias, both real and perceived, can reinforce existing beliefs or challenge them, potentially polarising audiences (Djenih & Hadid, 2024). Social media platforms also affect the quality and intensity of political expression. Each platform has different algorithmic characteristics and interaction culture (Al Fatih et al., 2024). Therefore, understanding political expression in the digital age requires a more in-depth and multidimensional approach.

Furthermore, the emergence of social media and personalised news feeds has created echo chambers, where individuals are primarily exposed to information that aligns with their pre-existing views, which subsequently impacts their political expression (Ahmmad et al., 2025). The structure of social media algorithms plays an important role in shaping the dynamics of participation. The concept of filter bubble and echo chamber explains that users tend to be exposed to information that is in line with their preferences (Rusmiati et al., 2025). The frequency and tone of coverage of certain topics can also influence. It's important for readers to connect various political issues, which ultimately influence their engagement in political discussions and activities.

Other factors shaping political expression are complex, such as political efficacy, communication competence, social environment, and individual motivation. The impact of these factors can also vary across social media platforms and contexts. Therefore, it's necessary to explore other approaches to understanding politi-

cal expression in the digital age (Prawira et al., 2024; Velasquez & Rojas, 2017).

CONCLUSION

The finding demonstrates a moderate positive association between social media news consumption and the political expression of social media users. It confirms that social media news consumption does not automatically drive youth political expression. The possibility of this effect is likely nuanced by other environmental or individual factors outside of this research such as political efficacy, communication competence, and individual motivation. The impact of these factors varies across contexts and platforms, necessitating an in-depth approach to understanding political expression in the digital age.

This research contributes to the picture of youth news consumption behavior and also political expression trends in the digital era and how both are related. Despite these contributions, the study has three primary constraints: a non-representative sampling frame, moderate internal validity, and the reliance on self-reported measures for political expression. The former limits the generalizability of the result across diverse populations, while the moderate internal validity suggests that unobserved confounders may have partially influenced the outcomes. Furthermore, the use of self-reported statements for political expression introduces the potential for bias, which may inflate the observed correlations. Consequently, we recommend a combination of content analysis and questionnaires to obtain more accurate data on political expression.

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