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DAFTAR ISI (TABLE OF CONTENT)

Participatory Communication for Equity of Access in the Management of Ketapang Aquaculture Ecotourism — Khairil Anam, Ade Irfan Abdurrahman, Rizal Abdi Pratama, Anisa Amalia —	172 – 185
Enhancing Generation Z's Political Efficacy Through Social Media Political Influencers — Anter Venus, Drina Intyaswati, Fitria Ayuningtyas, Puji Lestari —	186 – 203
The Role of Dayah Ulama in Political Communication during the 2024 Aceh Elections — Zulfikar Arahman, Muhibuddin Alamsyah —	204 – 216
Communication and Collaboration Model of Indonesian Delegation in Myanmar Earthquake Humanitarian Assistance — Muhamad Hidayat, Fajar Iqbal Mirza, Budi Riyanto, Kezia Nariswari Riyadi —	217 – 238
Online Media Framing of Mining Permit Policies of Religious Mass Organizations (Ormas): A Study on Detik.com and Kompas.com — Mukhlis Muhammad Maududi, Said Ramadhan, Eko Digdoyo —	239 – 254
Consolidating Democracy: Political Communication and Public Trust in Early Leadership Post-Election in Indonesia — Syukri, Tawakkal Baharuddin, Mohd Sufiean Hassan —	255 – 276

The Contestation of the Narratives of "Change" versus "Sustainability" on the Instagram Accounts of Two 2024 Presidential Candidates — Indah Suryawati, Muhammad Ikhwan, Rachmi Kurnia Siregar —	277 – 297
Bridging Policy and Public: Stakeholder Engagement Strategy in Indonesia's Ministry of Finance — Rahmawati Zulfiningrum, Heni Indrayani, Nico Aditia, Ibrahim Harriadi, Suwandi Sumartias, Joana Jaya —	298 – 316

Enhancing Generation Z's Political Efficacy Through Social Media Political Influencers

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ABSTRACT

Previous research has shown that political influencers affect internal political efficacy. The widespread exposure of Generation Z to political influencers on social media raises the question of whether this exposure enhances political knowledge, comprehension, and skills. The study examines the linear impact of political influencers on internal political efficacy by categorizing exposure as low, medium, or high. A survey was distributed through social media platforms. The study population consisted of Generation Z social media users, selected through purposive sampling (N = 488). Eligibility criteria included being between the ages of 17 and 26, holding Indonesian citizenship, and following at least one political influencer on social media. Data were analyzed using linear regression with SPSS version 25. The findings indicate that the influence of political influencers varies according to the level of their following. Influencers significantly affected internal political efficacy only among participants who followed them moderately. This effect was seen only among individuals with low or average political interest. For those with a high interest in politics, the influence of political influencers was minimal, likely because these individuals seek information from other sources. These results contribute to understanding the non-linear relationship between political influencer exposure and internal political efficacy.

Keywords: Generation Z, internal political efficacy, political influencers, political interest

ABSTRAK

Studi terdahulu telah menunjukkan adanya pengaruh dari political influencer terhadap internal political efficacy. Dengan begitu banyak terpaan political influencer yang dapat diterima Generasi Z melalui media sosial, memunculkan pertanyaan apakah semua terpaan tersebut berfungsi optimal dapat menambah pengetahuan, pemahaman, dan skill di bidang politik dari Gen Z. Studi ini bertujuan untuk mengevaluasi dampak linier dari political influencer terhadap internal political efficacy, dengan membaginya pada tiga kelompok tingkatan following (rendah, sedang, tinggi). Penelitian menggunakan metode survei yang dilakukan dengan mendistribusikan kuesioner melalui jejaring media sosial. Populasi merupakan Generasi Z pengguna media sosial, dan pengambilan sampel menggunakan teknik purposive sampling (N=488). Kriteria sampel adalah mereka dengan usia 17-26 tahun (Gen Z), warga negara Indonesia, dan mem follow minimum satu political influencer di media sosial. Analisis data menggunakan analisis regresi linier dengan aplikasi SPSS 25. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa pengaruh influencer politik memiliki perbedaan pada tingkat following yang berbeda. Hanya pada kelompok following moderat, influencer memberikan dampak pada internal political efficacy Gen Z. Selain itu, pengaruh influencer hanya berlaku jika individu memiliki ketertarikan politik yang rendah atau rata-rata. Ketika individu memiliki

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ketertarikan politik yang tinggi maka pengaruh influencer cenderung berkurang, hal ini dimungkinkan karena mereka dengan ketertarikan politik yang tinggi cenderung akan mencari informasi dari sumber alternatif lainnya. Temuan ini memberikan sumbangan konseptual terkait adanya hubungan non linier dari pengaruh political influencer terhadap internal political efficacy.

Kata Kunci: Generasi Z, efikasi politik internal, influencer politik, minat politik

INTRODUCTION

Influencers are active social media users who have a following due to their knowledge of relevant topics and the genuine connection they make with their audience. Through the substance they choose to present, they enjoy and maintain credibility and authenticity in a professional capacity. Influencers use their social media following for further purposes, which may involve product endorsements for companies. They may also choose to support political and social issues. A significant transformation in the advertising world has seen influencers' engagement in sharing content with their audiences rewarded.

Political interest and efficacy are the most powerful predictors of political engagement (Reichert & Print, 2017). Numerous studies have shown that political interest is a strong and positive predictor of socially acceptable political engagement. Political interest is usually defined as "the extent to which politics arouses citizens' curiosity" (Van Deth, 1990). This is also true for internal political efficacy, which is defined as the belief that one can understand political processes and facts and have an impact on political choices (Balch, 1974).

Over the past decade, social media has significantly impacted the way political communication is conducted. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube are now used for personal expression, business, and political debate. These spaces are especially important for shaping the political views of young people. The previous research has shown how the approach of some populist leaders is similar to that of social media influencers (Gandini et al., 2022). Marketing through influencers is a common tactic used by politicians to appeal to specific demographic groups (Wong, 2020; Glazer & Wells, 2019). Generation Z, often referred to as digital natives, primarily obtains their information from digital media. As a result, they are the group most likely to see political content from influencers (Riedl et al., 2021). Strategies for political communication that utilized social media effectively captured the attention of Generation Z in Indonesia (Alifatunnisa et al., 2024). Digital influencers significantly shape the political perspectives of the younger generation, with trust in these influencers playing a crucial role in enhancing their impact (Meilinda & Fransisca, 2024).

Political influencers are now seen as opinion leaders, not just entertainers. They help share political messages from leaders to the public. Unlike the old two-step flow model, audiences today interact more with these messages, discussing and sometimes challenging them. This interaction can enhance a person's confidence in their ability to understand and participate in politics, known as internal political efficacy (Bandura, 1977).

However, the link between seeing political influencers and feeling more politically capable is not straightforward. Kim (2019) and colleagues examined how the Internet shapes people's perceptions of politics, focusing on how this influences people's willingness to participate in politics. Some studies suggest that social media exposure can enhance political efficacy (Zaiter et al., 2023; Alarqan, 2021), although the findings are mixed. For example, some young people become more cynical if they believe influencer content is too simplistic or overly focused on financial gain (Schmuck et al., 2022). This means the impact of political influencers depends on several factors.

One factor moderating this relationship is political interest. Individuals with a high level of political interest tend to utilize influencer exposure to enhance their understanding, discuss, and affirm their political identity. Conversely, individuals with low political interest may simply be passive consumers who do not internalize political messages (Reichert, 2018; Stromback, Djerf-Pierre, & Shehata, 2013). This means that political interest plays a key role in explaining why influencer exposure can produce different effects on each individual.

Furthermore, this study emphasizes the novelty of the assumption that influencers' influence on IPE is not linear. Too little exposure may not be sufficient to foster political efficacy, while excessive exposure can potentially lead to information saturation and even rejection. This phenomenon can be explained through Herbert Simon's Theory of Bounded Rationality. This theory emphasizes that humans do not always make decisions with perfect rationality but are instead limited by cognitive capacity, available information, and social context (Simon, 1990). In the context of influencer exposure, bounded rationality explains why Gen Z audiences do not automatically absorb all political messages but instead select and rationalize them according to their capacity and political interests.

Therefore, this study rationalizes the hypothesis that the influence of political influencers on internal political efficacy is determined by the level of acceptance of influencer exposure. By evaluating exposure levels (low, medium, high), this study contributes to the digital political communication literature and enriches the understanding of how young people construct political beliefs in the social media era.

In this study, the use of social media is specific to consuming messages through following political influencers. The research questions in this study are; (1) Do following political

influencers and political interest affect internal political efficacy among generation Z? (2) Does political interest function as a moderating variable in the relationship between following political influencers and internal political efficacy? (3) Are there differences in the influence of political influencers on internal political efficacy based on variations in the influencer's exposure?

The hypotheses are:

H1 : Political influencers have a positive influence on internal political efficacy.

H2 : Political influencers have a positive influence on internal political efficacy.

H3 : Political interest moderates the positive and significant influence of political influencers on internal political efficacy.

H4 : There are differences in the influence of political influencers on internal political efficacy based on the extent of the influencer's exposure

RESEARCH METHOD

This study used a questionnaire distributed through social media. The sample consisted of the population of Generation Z social media users, with the following criteria: (1) 17-26 years old, (2) Indonesian citizens, and (3) following at least one political influencer on social media. Data collection was conducted from July to August 2024. Purposive sampling was used with set criteria. The questionnaire was a Google Form shared via WhatsApp groups, Instagram bios, and Twitter (X). The research instrument has ethical clearance (1496/EC/KEPK/VI/2024) Research respondents have been informed about the aims and benefits of the research, and they are required to fill out a statement stating their willingness to voluntarily provide research data. The sample size of 488 meets the minimum criteria using the Cochran formula (5% margin of error, 95% confidence interval). The data was then analyzed using regression analysis techniques in SPSS 25.

In addition to respondent demographics, data was also collected on three research variables, including: political influencer as the independent variable, political interest as the moderator variable, and internal political efficacy as the dependent variable. The measurement items for each variable in the questionnaire are as follows (Wasike, 2023). 1) The political influencer variable asks about activities related to following influencers. This includes: a) reading content, b) following controversial topics or issues, and c) participating in political discussions. 2) The political interest variable asks about activities linked to political interest after following influencers. This covers: a) reading political topics, b) watching political programs, and c) participating in political discussions. 3) The internal political efficacy variable measures respondents' political attitudes from an internal

perspective. This includes: a) better political understanding, b) possession of political skills, and c) political knowledge. The answer options for each item use 5-point Likert scale.

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was used to test the validity of the instrument; this analysis identifies and organizes a number of questionnaire items into constructs under one specific component or variable (Chua, 2014). In addition, Cronbach Alpha coefficient was used to evaluate the reliability of the instrument; each variable met the tolerance limit ($\alpha > 0.7$), with political influencer value = 0.856, political interest value = 0.795 and internal political efficacy value = 0.748.

Table 1. KMO and Bartlett's Test

Test	
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	0.838
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity Approx. Chi-Square	1847.290
df	36
Sig.	0.000

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO) in Table 1 yielded a value of 0.838 ($KMO > 0.5$), indicating that it met the adequacy requirements for factor analysis. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity yielded a score of 1,847.290 with a significance level of 0.000, thus meeting the validity requirements for factor analysis.

Table 2. Component Rotation Matrix

Items	Variable 1 Political influencer	Variable 2 Political interest	Variable 3 Internal political efficacy
Influencer1	0.871		
Influencer3	0.830		
Influencer2	0.829		
Interest2		0.822	
Interest3		0.790	
Interest1		0.732	
Efficacy2			0.827
Efficacy3			0.811
Efficacy1			0.722

Note: Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. Rotation converged in 4 iterations.

The validity of the well-distributed items is shown in Table 2, which also categorizes them by each variable. Stevens (1992) suggested limiting items considered valid as part of the research instrument to those with a loading factor above 0.4.

Table 3. Total Variance Explained

Component	Eigen Values Initial			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	4.115	45.717	45.717	2.351	26.127	26.127
2	1.418	15.760	61.477	2.082	23.133	49.260
3	.962	10.688	72.165	2.061	22.905	72.165

Based on Table 3, three factors or variables were formed from the EFA results. The total variance explained by these three variables was 72.165%.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Table 4. The Attributes of the Respondents and The Research Variables

Item		
Sex	Male	: 193 (39.5%)
	Female	: 295 (60.5%)
Education	High School	: 100 (20.5%)
	Diploma	: 100 (20.5%)
	Bachelor	: 275 (56.4%)
	Magister	: 13 (2.6%)
Age	Mean : 20.39	SD : 1.80
	Min : 17	Max : 26
Political Influlencer	Mean : 2.89	SD : 0.82
	Min : 1	Max: 5
Political Interest	Mean: 2.97	SD: 0.70
	Min: 1	Max: 5
Internal Political Efficacy	Mean : 3.21	SD : 0.061
	Min : 1.67	Max: 5

Table 4 shows that there are more female respondents (60.5%) than male (39.5%). The most respondents' education is bachelor (56.4%), with the average age of respondents is 20.39 years. The political influencer variable has an average value of 2.89, political interest has an average value of 2.97, and internal political efficacy is 3.21.

Three regression models are used in the analysis. The regression assumption tests met the criteria set for each regression model, including: 1) The results of the normality test (Kolmogorov-Smirnov) showed a significance value greater than 0.05, so the residuals are normally distributed. Second, the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) for each independent variable was less than 10, indicating no multicollinearity. Third, the heteroscedasticity test (Glejser Test) showed all independent variables had significance values greater than 0.05, indicating no heteroscedasticity.

Table 5. Linear Regression Analysis Model I

Model I	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	95% CI
Constant	2.393	0.350		6.843	0.000	1.705 – 3.081
Age	0.043	0.017	0.127	2.599	0.010	0.010 – 0.076
Sex	-0.040	0.058	-0.031	-0.685	0.494	-0.154 – 0.074
Education	-4.498E-5	0.035	0.000	-0.001	0.999	-0.069 – 0.069

Note: Dependent Variable: Internal Political Efficacy.

The results of Linear Regression Analysis with the dependent variable Internal Political Efficacy and the independent variables of respondent characteristics, which include; age, sex, and education in Table 5, show that only age has a positive and significant effect on internal efficacy owned by Generation Z, with a significance of 0.010.

Table 6. Linear Regression Analysis Model II

Model II	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	95% CI
Constant	1.484	0.317		4.677	0.000	0.861 – 2.107
Age	0.022	0.015	0.064	1.489	0.137	-0.007 – 0.051
Sex	-0.022	0.051	-0.017	-0.429	0.668	-0.122 – 0.078
Education	-0.001	0.031	-0.001	-0.030	0.976	-0.062 – 0.060
Influencer	0.089	0.035	0.120	2.573	0.010	0.020 – 0.158
Interest	0.350	0.041	0.404	8.690	0.000	0.269 – 0.431

Note: Dependent Variable: Internal Political Efficacy.

Table 6 is a development model of the first model, by adding political influencer and political interest variables as independent variables. The results of the analysis show that respondent characteristics (age, sex, and education) do not significantly affect the internal efficacy of Generation Z. Political influencers have a positive and significant effect on internal political efficacy, with a value of 0.089 with a significance of 0.010 ($p < 0.05$). H1 is accepted. Political interest also affects internal political efficacy with a value of 0.350 and a significance value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$). The effect of political interest (0.404) on internal efficacy is greater than political influencers (0.120). H2 is accepted.

Table 7. Linear Regression Analysis Model III

Model III	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	95% CI
Constant	2.782	0.438		6.351	0.000	1.921 – 3.643
Age	0.021	0.015	0.061	1.429	0.154	-0.008 – 0.050
Sex	-0.013	0.050	-0.011	-0.266	0.791	-0.111 – 0.085
Education	-0.004	0.030	-0.006	-0.136	0.892	-0.064 – 0.055
Influencer	-0.358	0.111	-0.480	-3.216	0.001	-0.576 – -0.140
Interest	-0.089	0.113	-0.101	-0.791	0.429	-0.311 – 0.133
Influencer* Interest	0.151	0.036	0.980	4.221	0.000	0.080 – 0.222

Note: Dependent Variable: Internal Political Efficacy

Linear regression analysis of the third model in Table 7, adding the interaction variable between influencer and interest to test the existence of interest variable as a moderator variable. The influencer variable significantly affects internal political efficacy, with a value of -0.358 and a significance of 0.001 ($p < 0.05$), this influence has a negative relationship direction. The interaction variable between influencer and interest variables positively and significantly affects internal political efficacy with a value of 0.151 and a significance of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$). The presence of opposing directions of influence, both positive and negative, from i) the direct influence of the influencer and ii) the interaction influence between the influencer and the interests, led to the rejection of H3 because these conflicting effects cancel each other out. Further analysis is necessary to fully understand the influence of political influencers.

Table 8. Summary of Regression Analysis Model with Change in R-Square

Model	R	R ²	Adj. R ²	ΔR^2	F Change	Sig. F Change
I	0.135	0.018	0.012			
II	0.492	0.242	0.234	0.224	71.219	0.000
III	0.518	0.269	0.260	0.027	17.766	0.000

Hierarchical regression analysis was conducted in three models to determine the additional contribution of each group of predictors (Table 8). Model I, with three initial predictors, produced a value of $R^2 = 0.018$ and an adjusted $R^2 = 0.012$. This indicates that the model can only explain 1.8% of the variation in the dependent variable. Model II, after the addition of two new predictors, the value of ΔR^2 increased to 0.224, and adjusted $R^2 = 0.234$. The change in $\Delta R^2 = 0.224$ indicates a 22.4% increase in the model's predictive ability. The F-test change = 71.219, $p < 0.001$, indicates that the additional contribution of the new predictors is statistically significant. Model III, with the addition of one interaction predictor, produced a value of $\Delta R^2 = 0.269$ and Adjusted $\Delta R^2 = 0.260$. The change in $\Delta R^2 = 0.027$ indicates an additional contribution of 2.7%. The F-test result of Change = 17.766, $p < 0.001$, indicates that although the increase is relatively small, the predictors added to this model still contribute significantly to explaining the dependent variable.

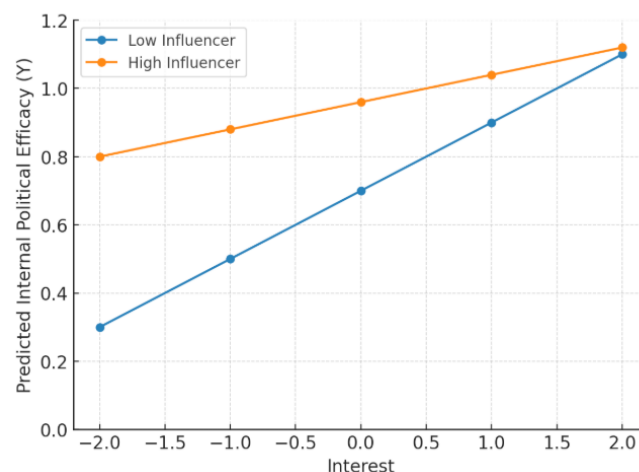
**Figure 1. An Interaction Plot Between Variables**

Figure 1 shows that when political interest levels are average or low, influencers effectively increase individuals' internal political efficacy. However, the findings also show that the interaction coefficient between influencers and interest is negative. This indicates that the

higher the level of interest, the more the influencer's positive influence decreases.

To further understand the influence of political influencers, additional analysis was conducted. The political influencer variable was divided into three groups, namely low, medium, and high levels of followers. The grouping is based on the mean and standard deviation of the political influencer variable ($\mu \pm 5\sigma$).

Table 9. Linear Regression Analysis Based on the Level of Influencer Following

Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	95% CI
Following_Low						
Constant	2.344	2.344		8.037	0.000	1.766 – 2.922
Influencer	0.223	0.223	0.143	1.500	0.136	-0.072 – 0.518
Interest	0.122	0.122	0.145	1.521	0.131	-0.036 – 0.280
R ²	0.230					
Following_Medium						
Constant	1.406	0.252		5.579	0.000	0.910 – 1.902
Influencer	0.176	0.082	0.116	2.135	0.034	0.015 – 0.337
Interest	0.414	0.053	0.424	7.779	0.000	0.310 – 0.518
R ²	0.471					
Following_Medium (interact.)						
Constant	2.339	1.125		2.079	0.039	0.125 – 4.553
Influencer	-0.133	0.372	-0.088	-0.358	0.721	-0.865 – 0.599
Interest	0.102	0.371	0.104	0.275	0.784	-0.628 – 0.832
Influen*Interest	0.103	0.121	0.430	0.851	0.396	-0.135 – 0.341
R ²	0.474					
Following_High						
Constant	0.782	0.881		0.887	0.378	-0.972 – 2.536
Influencer	0.249	0.214	0.114	1.164	0.248	-0.177 – 0.675
Interest	0.505	0.098	0.505	5.178	0.000	0.310 – 0.700
R ²	0.542					

Note: Dependent Variable: Internal Political Efficacy.

Table 9 shows that Generation Z with a low level of influencer following, their following activity has no effect on political efficacy, with a value of 0.223 and a significance of 0.136 ($p > 0.05$). Political interest, with a value of 0.122, also has no significant effect, with a significance of 0.131 ($p > 0.05$).

Furthermore, in the medium influencer following level group, influencer and interest have a positive and significant effect on internal political efficacy, each with a value of 0.176 (sig = 0.034) and a value of 0.414 (sig = 0.000). To determine the role of variable interest as a moderating variable, the effect of the interaction variable is seen. The results show that the effect of the influencer and interest interaction variables is not significant, the value is 0.103 with a significance of 0.396 ($p > 0.05$). This outcome reveals that the interest variable does not function as a moderating variable.

In groups with a high level of following influencers, their activity in following influencers does not significantly affect internal political efficacy, with a value of 0.249 and a significance of 0.248 ($p > 0.05$). Political interest has a positive and significant effect of 0.505 ($p < 0.00$). The overall results show that political interest does not function as a moderating variable. It has a direct influence on internal political efficacy only among medium and high-level groups.

Political influencers have varying levels of influence across different groups; their influence on internal political efficacy is only significant in medium groups. H4 is accepted.

Discussion

The results of the analysis show that the demographics of Generation Z, including age, sex, and education, do not have an impact on internal political efficacy. This demographic is evaluated in conjunction with their activity of following political influencers on social media. These results differ from previous findings. Fraile and Miguel (2022) stated that there were differences in the level of internal political efficacy between men and women, where the study was conducted on people from 27 European countries. The study also stated the influence of age, and education on internal political efficacy. This difference in results is possible because this study on Generation Z has a tendency for the age and education of respondents to be homogeneous. In addition, the context of social media use and influencer exposure allows sex, education, and age to be insignificant to internal political efficacy. Generation Z, with different backgrounds, is also likely to receive the same political messages from political influencers on social media. According to Harff and Schmuck (2023), political influencers can function as agents of empowerment, contributing to an increase in internal political efficacy among youth.

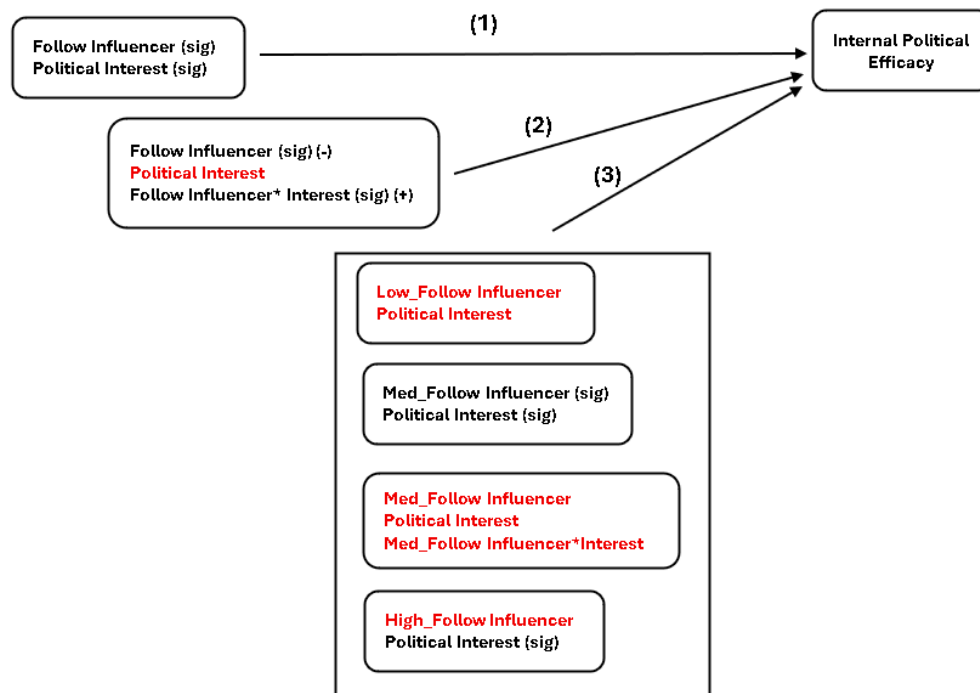


Figure 2. Visualization of the Influence of Political Interest and Following-Influencer Grouping on Internal Political Efficacy.

Figure 2 step (3) shows the results of the detailed grouping of influencer following into low, medium, and high. The findings indicate that influencer following and political interest influence internal political efficacy only in the medium (moderate) group, while in the high group, only political interest has an effect. In the moderate group, political interest interacts with internal political efficacy in a way that enhances attention and knowledge, which frequently boosts a person's conviction in their own ability to affect politics (Levy & Akiva, 2019; Reichert, 2016; Kopacheva, 2021).

Political interest is not significant as a moderating variable between political influencers and internal political efficacy; despite the initial assumption of a moderating role (Wasike, 2023; Reichert, 2018). The finding that political interest has a direct influence on internal political efficacy is in line with previous studies. Ardèvol-Abreu et al's (2017) study said that respondents received online exposure and showed that demographic factors did not play a role in internal political efficacy. His findings showed that political interest was positively associated with internal political efficacy.

When the level of following of political influencers among Generation Z is grouped, there is a difference. The level of following is low, where the activities of reading political content, following controversial issues, and following political discussions are carried out with low frequency. Exposure to content and messages received from political influencers and their political interests does not impact internal political efficacy.

At a moderate level of following political influencers, each exposure to content and messages from political influencers can increase internal political efficacy. Also, from their respective political interests. Meanwhile, Generation Z with a high frequency of following political influencers, resulting in the exposure of messages received, has no effect on increasing internal political efficacy; only political interest can increase their internal political efficacy.

Findings for the moderate/medium group, considering the interaction between political influencers and political interest, indicate that political influencers have a positive regression coefficient. This indicates that, in general, the presence of influencers can increase the internal political efficacy of Generation Z. In other words, when political interest levels are average or low, influencers effectively increase individuals' political knowledge, understanding, and skills. However, findings also show that the interaction coefficient between influencers and interest is negative. This indicates that the higher the level of interest, the more the positive influence of influencers decreases. At low levels of political interest, individuals tend to rely on external sources, such as influencers. The information is used for understanding political issues, thereby strengthening the influence of influencers on internal politics.

Conversely, for individuals with a high level of political interest, the influence of influencers tends to weaken. This can be explained by the fact that individuals with high political interest typically possess the motivation, knowledge, and independence to seek and evaluate political information. They are more critical in filtering messages, so they are less easily influenced by influencer opinions. In fact, in some cases, highly critical audiences may reject or ignore influencer messages deemed biased or unreliable. Thus, it can be concluded that influencers are effective in increasing internal political efficacy among groups with low to moderate levels of political interest. However, this effectiveness decreases in groups with high levels of political interest, as audiences already possess sufficient cognitive capacity and motivation to determine their political stance independently.

This is related to Bounded Rationality, which states that individuals do not always make fully rational decisions; a) At low levels of political interest, individuals have limited capacity to process political information independently, and they tend to use shortcuts in the form of opinions or recommendations from influencers. b) Individuals with high levels of political interest tend to be more active in seeking information, evaluating sources more, and striving. They overcome their cognitive limitations by enriching their knowledge. As a result, they no longer rely on influencers as their primary reference. In fact, if an influencer's argument is deemed superficial, individuals may reject or criticize it.

CONCLUSION

This study was conducted on Generation Z with ages ranging from 17-26 years old, and following at least one political influencer on social media. The findings suggest that political influencers play a significant role in enhancing internal political efficacy among Gen Z. Meanwhile, political interest also contributes equally to strengthening this efficacy. The effectiveness of influencer exposure depends on it being optimally received by individuals, neither too little nor too much. Individuals with low political interest often rely on political influencers as a source of information among Gen Z. In contrast, those with high levels of interest seek alternative sources of information, making the influencer's role less effective.

This study makes a conceptual contribution to political communication research by demonstrating the conditional nature of political influencer exposure on the internal political efficacy of Generation Z. The findings reveal a "sweet spot" in which medium levels of following political influencers positively enhance efficacy, while low exposure produces no effect, and high exposure leads to saturation. This non-linear pattern challenges the conventional assumption of a linear relationship between exposure and efficacy, thereby refining theoretical perspectives on how digital political influence operates in contemporary media environments.

These findings yield several practical implications for key stakeholders in the political communication landscape.

1. Electoral Institutions: The General Elections Commission (KPU) may strategically engage political influencers as credible disseminators of electoral information and motivators of participation. This engagement thus fosters greater political efficacy and subsequent engagement.

2. Civil Society Organizations: Civic-oriented NGOs may mobilize their members as micro-influencers to encourage followers to monitor and engage with the political process in their local communities.
3. Political Campaigns: Candidate campaigns are advised to develop influencer-driven content that is relevant, accessible, and engaging for target audiences. Additionally, managing exposure frequency is essential to prevent both insufficient reach and saturation. This strategy will maintain optimal influence..

This study is subject to certain limitations. Political influencer exposure was measured across social media platforms collectively, without distinguishing between platforms that possess unique affordances and audience cultures. This approach may introduce biases in evaluating the effects of exposure.

Future research should address these limitations. Specifically, how exposure is defined, considering the unique features of platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter/X, where content and user behavior can vary significantly. Further studies could also build on this research by:

1. Conducting longitudinal studies. It aims to examine whether the effects of influencer exposure on political efficacy persist beyond electoral cycles.
2. Undertaking cross-cultural comparisons to test whether the “sweet spot” effect is consistent across different political systems and generational cohorts.
3. Performing message-level analyses with types of influencer content, such as informational, emotional, humorous, or activist. It will identify and enhance efficacy most effectively.

In summary, this study helps us better understand how exposure to political influencers affects people, and it offers useful ideas for election officials, NGOs, and campaign teams. By tackling its limitations and exploring new questions, future research can shed more light on how social media influencers impact political efficacy today.

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