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Generation Z's Civic Engagement in the Age of Artificial Intelligence: An Integrative Literature Review and Implications for Civic Education

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ABSTRACT

Generative artificial intelligence (AI) is reshaping the information environment in which Generation Z learns about and acts on public issues, yet existing reviews have examined AI and youth political participation without linking these changes to the goals of Civic Education. This study aims to synthesize how AI transforms Generation Z's civic engagement and to identify its implications for Civic Education. An integrative literature review, reported in line with the PRISMA 2020 principles, was conducted on peer-reviewed articles, conference proceedings, and policy reports published between 2023 and 2026 and retrieved from Scopus and Google Scholar in July 2026; 19 documents met the inclusion criteria and were analyzed through thematic synthesis. The findings reveal three interrelated shifts: (1) a shift in the spaces of engagement from physical and institutional settings to networked digital spaces; (2) a shift in the ways of engagement, as social media, civic technologies, and generative AI are used to access information, express aspirations, produce content, advocate, and mobilize; and (3) a shift in the capacity of engagement, as generative AI accelerates information processing and content production. These shifts are accompanied by misinformation, manipulation, privacy risks, and unequal access, while direct empirical evidence on Generation Z's own use of generative AI for civic purposes remains scarce. The study contributes a three-shift conceptual model and concludes that Civic Education should integrate AI literacy, critical verification skills, digital ethics, and project-based civic practice so that Generation Z can participate critically, ethically, and responsibly.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence; Civic Education; Civic Engagement; Digital Citizenship; Generation Z

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INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI), particularly generative AI, has changed how information is produced, circulated, and consumed in the public sphere. Generative AI enables text, images, audio, and video to be produced quickly and at scale, which creates opportunities for wider access to information and public participation but also raises concerns about misleading information, deepfakes, the manipulation of political perceptions, and polarization (Coeckelbergh, 2025; Winata et al., 2026). The relationship between AI and democracy is therefore neither simply threatening nor simply empowering; its effects depend on how democracy is conceptualized and how AI is used in democratic practice (Wiewiura et al., 2026).

These changes are particularly relevant for young citizens. In Indonesia, the 2024 national internet survey reported an internet penetration rate of 87.02% among Generation Z, who also formed the largest share (34.40%) of internet users (APJII, 2024). As the generation most immersed in digital and AI-mediated environments, Generation Z is the group whose civic engagement is most directly shaped by these technological changes, which makes it an important focus for Civic Education research.

Generation Z, commonly defined as individuals born between 1997 and 2012 (Dimock, 2019), is a group that has grown up in a digital environment, making social media and various digital platforms an important part of how they obtain information, communicate, and express their views on public issues. In the Indonesian context, social media is also utilized by Generation Z as a source of information and a space for expressing political views (Hariyanti et al., 2026). The development of AI, particularly generative AI, has further expanded and transformed this digital environment through its ability to generate and disseminate information rapidly. This condition provides Generation Z with opportunities to obtain and access political information, but it also increases their vulnerability to biased and manipulative information (Khofi, 2025). Empirical evidence from young Indonesian social media users likewise shows that the authenticity and credibility of

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circulating information remain a major problem (Tarsidi et al., 2023). Therefore, the development of AI represents an important context for understanding changes in Generation Z's patterns of civic engagement.

Civic engagement refers to individuals' involvement in various social and political activities related to community life and public interests. With the development of the digital environment, such engagement is no longer limited to direct civic activities but also takes place through digital media, including expressing opinions, sharing information, participating in public discussions, building networks, and engaging in collective action online (Sampaio et al., 2024). In line with this, Alvinca & Suyato (2025) emphasize that civic engagement encompasses interconnected social and political dimensions that shape civic participation. Among Generation Z, the development of digital technology has also opened up new forms of engagement that enable young citizens to play a more active role in accessing information, expressing aspirations, and participating in public discussions through digital spaces (Sobari, 2026). Thus, digital spaces have become an important arena for the development of Generation Z's civic engagement.

To analyze this transformation, this study draws on three complementary perspectives. First, Ekman and Amnå (2012) distinguish civic engagement, understood as latent involvement in public matters, from manifest political participation aimed at influencing political outcomes; this distinction is used to separate everyday digital civic activities from formal political participation. Second, Bennett et al. (2009) contrast the dutiful citizen, who participates through institutions such as elections and parties, with the actualizing citizen, who participates through loosely networked, self-expressive, and digitally mediated activities. Third, the concept of participatory politics describes peer-based, interactive actions, such as circulating information, producing content, and mobilizing networks, through which young people seek voice and influence on public issues (Kahne et al., 2016). Within this framework, digital citizenship refers to the norms, competencies, and practices that enable citizens to participate responsibly in digital society (Choi, 2016). In this article, civic engagement is used as the umbrella concept, political participation refers to its manifest political form, and digital citizenship refers to the competencies and norms that underpin engagement in digital spaces.

The development of AI has also transformed the forms and ways of civic engagement, particularly through the use of technology to access information, express aspirations, develop advocacy efforts, and organize collective action in digital spaces. Generative AI has even begun to be used in digital civics practices to support advocacy activities and community communication (Üstündağ et al., 2026). However, these developments also present challenges, including misinformation, privacy concerns, and trust in AI-generated information (Üstündağ et al., 2026; Winata et al., 2026). It is therefore important to distinguish two layers of change: social media and recommendation algorithms have reshaped where and how young people engage, whereas generative AI adds a new layer by enabling citizens to process and produce civic content themselves. At the social media layer, Generation Z's engagement in digital spaces can develop into forms of activism through various online civic and political activities (Fakhri et al., 2025). This phenomenon indicates that AI not only changes the means of participation but also the ways in which Generation Z engages in civic life.

These changes pose a challenge for Civic Education, which is tasked with preparing young people to participate critically, ethically, and responsibly. AI literacy is increasingly regarded as part of civic literacy because AI affects citizens' rights, decisions, and social lives, and it involves understanding what AI is, what it can and cannot do, and how it should be used ethically (DiPaola et al., 2024; Long & Magerko, 2020; Ng et al., 2021). In the Indonesian context, Pancasila and Civic Education is expected to develop students' critical reasoning and civic character; however, it remains unclear how these goals should be translated into learning that responds to AI-mediated civic life. Initial evidence shows that integrating AI into Civic Education can support digital citizenship and critical thinking (Salsabila et al., 2026), but such evidence is still limited to single-school contexts.

Previous studies have examined the influence of generative AI on Generation Z's political participation and information vulnerability (Khofi, 2025), Generation Z's political engagement in the context of digital democracy and post-truth politics (Latuconsina et al., 2026), and civic engagement within digital citizenship (Alvinca & Suyato, 2025). However, these reviews focus mainly on political participation or information risks and do not connect the AI-driven transformation of civic engagement with the competencies that Civic Education should develop. Ideally, Civic Education should be grounded in an understanding of how young citizens actually engage in AI-mediated environments; in practice, such an integrated synthesis is not yet available. To address this gap, this study poses three research questions: (RQ1) How does AI transform the spaces, forms, and ways of Generation Z's civic engagement? (RQ2) What opportunities and challenges does AI create for that engagement? (RQ3) What are the implications for Civic Education? The novelty of this study

lies in integrating the literature on AI, Generation Z, and civic engagement from a Civic Education perspective and in proposing a three-shift conceptual model (spaces, ways, and capacity of engagement). Theoretically, the study extends civic engagement frameworks to AI-mediated contexts; practically, it provides a basis for designing AI-responsive Civic Education. Accordingly, this study aims to synthesize how AI transforms Generation Z's civic engagement and to identify its implications for Civic Education.

METHOD

This study employed an integrative literature review design, which allows empirical studies, literature reviews, and conceptual or policy documents to be synthesized together; the reporting of the search and selection process was informed by the PRISMA 2020 guidelines (Page et al., 2021). The units of analysis were scholarly documents addressing AI, Generation Z or youth, civic engagement, digital citizenship, digital democracy, political participation, and Civic Education. The research instrument was a data extraction sheet recording the author, year, country or context, design, focus, and key findings of each document.

Documents were retrieved from Scopus and Google Scholar in July 2026, following the search and selection steps recommended by van Wee and Banister (2024). The search terms covered three concept groups: AI ("artificial intelligence", "generative AI"), civic engagement ("civic engagement", "political participation", "digital citizenship", "digital democracy", "civic education"), and young citizens ("Generation Z", "Gen Z", "youth"). Documents were selected by examining their titles, abstracts, and full texts against the inclusion and exclusion criteria presented in Table 1. Because the initial search was not logged at the level of individual records, the number of records at each screening stage is not reported; the selection process is summarized in Figure 1, and 19 documents were included in the synthesis.

Table 1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Criterion	Inclusion	Exclusion
Topic	AI, digital media, or civic technology in relation to civic engagement, political participation, digital citizenship, or Civic Education	Purely technical AI studies without a civic or democratic dimension
Population/context	Generation Z, youth, students, or citizens engaged in digital civic practice	Studies focusing exclusively on other age groups without implications for youth
Document type	Peer-reviewed journal articles, conference proceedings, and reports by international organizations	Theses, news articles, opinion pieces, and blogs
Publication year	2023–2026	Before 2023 (seminal works were used only for the theoretical framework)
Language	English or Indonesian	Other languages
Access	Full text available	Abstract only
Stage	Process	
Identification	Documents identified through keyword searches in Scopus and Google Scholar (July 2026)	
Screening	Titles and abstracts screened against the inclusion and exclusion criteria (Table 1)	
Eligibility	Full texts assessed for relevance to the three research questions	
Included	Documents included in the thematic synthesis (n = 19)	

Figure 1. Flow of the Literature Search and Selection Process (Adapted from PRISMA 2020)

Data were analyzed through thematic synthesis following the six phases of Braun and Clarke (2006) as operationalized by Naeem et al. (2023). First, the key findings of each document were extracted and labelled with descriptive codes (e.g., "AI-assisted content production", "algorithmic exposure", and "information verification"). Second, related codes were grouped into candidate themes. Third, the candidate themes were reviewed against the extracted data and refined into the four themes reported in the Results and Discussion. The analysis combined a deductive orientation derived from the research questions and theoretical framework with inductive coding that allowed new codes, such as the gap between digital activity and substantive engagement, to emerge from the data. Fourth, findings were compared across studies to identify convergences and contradictions and were then synthesized into the three-shift model. Because the corpus combined empirical, review, and conceptual documents, the type of evidence provided by each document was recorded during data extraction (Table 2) and taken into account when interpreting the findings; claims supported only by review or conceptual sources are identified as such in the Results and Discussion.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Characteristics of the Analyzed Studies

The 19 documents analyzed were published between 2023 and 2026, most of them in 2025 (n = 9) and 2026 (n = 7). Eleven documents focus on the Indonesian context and eight on international contexts. Nine are empirical studies (three quantitative and six qualitative or case studies), five are literature reviews, four are conceptual or policy documents, and one is an editorial introduction (Table 2). Notably, only three empirical studies examine AI directly (DiPaola et al., 2024; Salsabila et al., 2026; Üstündağ et al., 2026), and none examines Generation Z's self-directed use of generative AI for civic participation. Most evidence on Generation Z's civic engagement therefore concerns social media, whereas evidence on AI is largely conceptual. This imbalance is taken into account in interpreting the findings below.

Table 2. Characteristics of the Analyzed Studies (n = 19)

Characteristic	Category	Studies	n
Year	2023	Tarsidi et al. (2023)	1
	2024	DiPaola et al. (2024); Sampaio et al. (2024)	2
	2025	Alvinca & Suyato (2025); Coeckelbergh (2025); Fakhri et al. (2025); Khofi (2025); OECD (2025); Putri et al. (2025); Retnasari et al. (2025); Sari et al. (2025); Sieber et al. (2025)	9
	2026	Hariyanti et al. (2026); Latuconsina et al. (2026); Salsabila et al. (2026); Sobari (2026); Üstündağ et al. (2026); Wiewiura et al. (2026); Winata et al. (2026)	7
Context	Indonesia	Alvinca & Suyato; Fakhri et al.; Hariyanti et al.; Khofi; Latuconsina et al.; Putri et al.; Retnasari et al.; Salsabila et al.; Sari et al.; Sobari; Tarsidi et al.	11
	International	Coeckelbergh; DiPaola et al. (USA); OECD; Sampaio et al.; Sieber et al.; Üstündağ et al. (Australia); Wiewiura et al.; Winata et al.	8
Design	Quantitative	Fakhri et al.; Hariyanti et al.; Sari et al.	3
	Qualitative/case study	DiPaola et al.; Retnasari et al.; Salsabila et al.; Sobari; Tarsidi et al.; Üstündağ et al.	6
	Literature review	Alvinca & Suyato; Khofi; Latuconsina et al.; Putri et al.; Winata et al.	5
	Conceptual/policy	Coeckelbergh; OECD; Sieber et al.; Wiewiura et al.	4
	Editorial	Sampaio et al.	1
Main focus	AI	Coeckelbergh; DiPaola et al.; Khofi; OECD; Salsabila et al.; Sieber et al.; Üstündağ et al.; Wiewiura et al.; Winata et al.	9
	Social media/digital citizenship	Alvinca & Suyato; Fakhri et al.; Hariyanti et al.; Latuconsina et al.; Putri et al.; Retnasari et al.; Sampaio et al.; Sari et al.; Sobari; Tarsidi et al.	10

Transformation of Generation Z's Civic Engagement in the Era of Artificial Intelligence

The literature study findings indicate that the development of digital technology has transformed the spaces and forms of Generation Z's civic engagement. Civic engagement is no longer carried out solely through organizations, face-to-face meetings, social activities, or formal political channels, but has also expanded through digital spaces. Social media has become one of the spaces that enables young people to obtain information about public issues, express their opinions, interact with other citizens, and participate in various social and political activities. Sampaio et al. (2024) note, in their introduction to a special issue on youth and digital civic engagement, that the development of digital media has expanded young people's engagement in the digital commons, including through civic activities and activism. This shift is consistent with Bennett et al.'s (2009) argument that young people increasingly practice an actualizing, networked form of citizenship and with evidence that peer-based participatory politics has become an important channel of youth engagement (Kahne et al., 2016). Thus, digital spaces have become an important part of the civic environment of young people.

These findings are consistent with the study by Tarsidi et al. (2023), which shows that the use of social media plays a role in increasing young people's awareness and knowledge of social and political issues in Indonesia. Social media also enables interaction and discussion among individuals with different viewpoints. However, the study also identifies issues concerning the authenticity and credibility of information circulating on social media. However, because this qualitative study involved only 15 young social media users aged 18–

24 and focused on social media rather than AI, its findings indicate patterns rather than generalizable trends for Generation Z as a whole. Therefore, digital literacy and the ability to verify information are important for civic engagement.

Among Generation Z in Indonesia, this development is increasingly evident through various digital civics practices. Sobari (2026) found that Generation Z developed various civic technology prototypes in the context of the 2024 Indonesian election. These prototypes included access to candidate information, online channels for expressing aspirations, discussion forums for political deliberation, interactive campaigns, and peer mobilization. These findings demonstrate a shift from citizens' roles as merely voters toward more participatory forms of citizenship through the use of digital technology.

Changes can also be observed in the use of social media as a means of political participation. Hariyanti et al. (2026), through a study involving 356 Generation Z participants in Pekanbaru, found that social media is used to obtain political information, communicate, and express political views. These forms of engagement include following political accounts, posting comments, sharing information, responding to content, and engaging in other activities on social media. These findings demonstrate that young people's engagement can take place through relatively simple digital activities as well as through more active forms of public communication. Because this survey was conducted in a single city, its findings should be read alongside other Indonesian evidence: a quantitative study in Bandung likewise found that digital citizenship behavior was associated with Generation Z's political engagement (Fakhri et al., 2025), while a qualitative study of young social media users identified similar patterns of information seeking and discussion (Tarsidi et al., 2023). Together, these studies suggest a consistent pattern across contexts, although representative national data are still lacking.

The emergence of generative AI has further expanded this transformation. AI can help users access, process, summarize, translate, and generate information in a relatively short time. In the context of digital civics, Üstündağ et al. (2026) show that generative AI has begun to be used to support community advocacy activities, including scrutiny, outreach, and advocacy. This means that AI is not only a tool for consuming information but can also be used to help citizens produce information and develop communication related to public issues. However, this evidence comes from a qualitative study of grassroots advocacy groups in Brisbane, Australia, rather than from Generation Z specifically. Among the documents analyzed, Salsabila et al. (2026) provide the only Indonesian empirical evidence of young people using AI in a civic learning context, and no study directly examines Generation Z's self-directed use of generative AI for civic participation. The role of generative AI in Generation Z's civic engagement should therefore be understood as an emerging possibility supported by early evidence rather than an established pattern.

These changes indicate that the transformation of Generation Z's civic engagement in the AI era cannot be understood merely as a shift of activities from offline to online spaces. The transformation also occurs in the media, methods, speed, and capacity of engagement. While digital technology previously enabled citizens to communicate and participate through social media, generative AI provides additional capabilities for processing and producing content. Thus, we propose, as a theoretical proposition to be tested in future empirical research, that generative AI may expand Generation Z's capacity to understand public issues, express aspirations, develop advocacy efforts, and organize collective action.

Table 3. Synthesis of the Transformation of Generation Z's Civic Engagement: Social Media Era and Generative AI Era

Aspect	Conventional Pattern	Social Media Era	Additional Change in the Generative AI Era	Supporting Studies
Information	Conventional media and limited sources	Social media and platforms; algorithmic exposure	AI summarizes, translates, and personalizes information	Sampaio et al. (2024); Hariyanti et al. (2026); Khofi (2025)
Expression of aspirations	Face-to-face forums and formal institutions	Comments, posts, and digital aspiration channels	AI assists in formulating and drafting arguments	Sobari (2026); Hariyanti et al. (2026); Üstündağ et al. (2026)
Content production	Requires specific media and resources	User-generated content (Stories, Reels, templates)	Text, images, and video produced quickly with AI	Sari et al. (2025); Üstündağ et al. (2026)

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Aspect	Conventional Pattern	Social Media Era	Additional Change in the Generative AI Era	Supporting Studies
Advocacy	Organizations and direct actions	Digital campaigns, petitions, and online boycotts	AI simplifies documents and drafts petitions and campaign materials	Fakhri et al. (2025); Üstündağ et al. (2026)
Public discussion	Face-to-face meetings and conventional media	Online forums and social media across geographic boundaries	AI-supported deliberation tools (limited evidence)	Tarsidi et al. (2023); Sobari (2026); OECD (2025)
Collective action	Mobilization through organizations	Mobilization and coordination through digital networks	Not yet empirically documented	Sari et al. (2025); Sobari (2026)
Information evaluation	Verification through conventional sources	Assessing the credibility of viral content	Detecting AI-generated and synthetic content	Tarsidi et al. (2023); Latuconsina et al. (2026); Winata et al. (2026)

Source: Authors' synthesis; supporting studies are listed for each aspect.

Opportunities and Challenges of Artificial Intelligence for Civic Engagement

The development of AI provides opportunities to expand civic engagement by increasing access to information and citizens' ability to process public information. Generative AI can help users understand complex information, formulate ideas, produce communication materials, and disseminate messages to the public (Üstündağ et al., 2026). At the same time, Khofi (2025) shows that the same capabilities operate through algorithmic personalization, the accelerated circulation of narratives, and emotion-based communication, which can narrow and distort the information environment. The opportunity and the risk therefore stem from the same technical capacity, and their balance depends on users' ability to evaluate information.

These opportunities are also related to the ability of technology to reduce certain barriers to participation. The OECD (2025) notes that new technologies, including AI, can be used to reduce barriers to participation, enhance government capacity, and support participation and deliberation processes that are more accessible and accountable. In the context of Generation Z's civic engagement, these opportunities can be translated into the use of technology to obtain information, express aspirations, interact with others, and participate in civic activities without always relying on physical meetings. However, the OECD discusses these opportunities mainly at the level of government-led participation processes, and the documents analyzed provide no direct evidence of Generation Z using AI-enabled e-participation channels; this opportunity should therefore be regarded as a potential that requires empirical verification.

The use of AI can also support community advocacy activities. Üstündağ et al. (2026) demonstrate that generative AI can be used in digital civics practices to support monitoring, communication, and advocacy activities. AI's ability to generate and process content can help community groups develop communication materials that are easier to understand and expand the reach of their messages. Thus, AI has the potential to enhance citizens' capacity to articulate public interests and build support for an issue.

Nevertheless, this increased capacity is accompanied by challenges. One of the main challenges is the growing volume of information that users must evaluate. Generative AI enables the large-scale production of text, images, audio, and video, making it increasingly difficult to distinguish between authentic information, modified information, and information generated entirely by machines. In a systematic review of AI and democracy Winata et al. (2026) identify misleading information, technological risks, and regulatory issues as important aspects in discussions concerning the relationship between AI and democracy.

This issue is also related to the quality of civic engagement. When citizens obtain inaccurate information and subsequently use it to form opinions or take action, technology that is intended to expand participation may instead result in engagement that is not based on adequate information. Latuconsina et al. (2026) show that political literacy plays a role in helping Generation Z critically evaluate political information, while a post-truth environment can undermine this process through biased and manipulative information. These findings reinforce the importance of information evaluation skills in Generation Z's civic engagement in digital spaces.

Beyond issues related to information, the use of AI also raises concerns regarding transparency, power, privacy, and public involvement in decision-making concerning technology. Sieber et al. (2025) demonstrate that public participation in AI is important for democracy, but the complexity and lack of transparency of AI,

as well as the resources required to engage with it, can create barriers to meaningful public involvement. The study identifies various forms of participation in AI and emphasizes the importance of ensuring that public participation is not merely procedural but also meaningful in decision-making processes.

These participation barriers are closely related to how AI is governed. Coeckelbergh (2025) identifies a *democratic deficit* when inherently political questions about AI are treated as technocratic matters, and he emphasizes active citizenship and Civic Education as ways to steer AI toward the common good. Building on the mapping by Wiewiura et al. (2026), which shows that judgments about AI depend on the model of democracy used, this review suggests that a participatory and deliberative model of democracy, consistent with the deliberative principle of Pancasila democracy, is the most relevant lens for Indonesian Civic Education. From this perspective, Generation Z should be prepared not only as users of AI but also as citizens who can question, deliberate on, and participate in decisions about how AI is used in public life.

Based on this synthesis, the opportunities and challenges associated with AI are closely interconnected. The greater the capacity of technology to expand access and enable participation, the greater the need for citizens to possess the ability to evaluate both the technology and the information it generates. Therefore, AI should not be understood merely as an instrument for increasing digital activity, but as a technology that requires literacy, oversight, ethics, and critical thinking skills so that its use can support meaningful civic engagement.

Changes in Generation Z's Civic Engagement Patterns

Changes in digital technology have resulted in civic engagement patterns that are increasingly flexible, participatory, and networked. Generation Z can engage with public issues at various levels of activity, ranging from seeking information and following current issues to commenting, sharing content, participating in discussions, and taking collective action. In terms of Ekman and Amnå's (2012) typology, many of these activities represent latent civic engagement that may or may not develop into manifest political participation.

The evidence reviewed in the previous subsection (Hariyanti et al., 2026; Tarsidi et al., 2023) also indicates that the boundary between information recipients and information producers is becoming increasingly fluid, as users can simultaneously consume, respond to, and disseminate information. This pattern corresponds to the actualizing citizenship described by Bennett et al. (2009), in which self-expression and peer networks complement or replace institutional channels as the main modes of engagement.

Digital activities can also develop into forms of activism. Fakhri et al. (2025) found an association between digital citizenship behavior and political engagement among Generation Z in Indonesia, particularly in the context of online boycott movements. The study indicates that activities in digital spaces can be associated with political actions and consumer behaviors that have a social dimension.

More recent findings are reported by Sari et al. (2025) through a study of Generation Z's Instagram activism in Indonesia. The study demonstrates a significant relationship between digital activism through Instagram and online civic engagement. Activities through Stories, Reels, and various digital templates are used not only to disseminate information and shape opinions but also to coordinate actions both online and offline. These findings demonstrate that activities carried out in digital spaces can develop into more substantive forms of civic engagement. The study also engages with the slacktivism debate, that is, the concern that low-cost online actions such as liking or sharing substitute for more demanding forms of participation (Christensen, 2011). Its findings suggest that Instagram activism is not merely slacktivism, but they also imply that the civic value of digital activity depends on whether it is connected to understanding, deliberation, and action, a point developed further below.

Beyond Indonesia, research on participatory politics shows that peer-based digital activities, such as circulating information, producing media, and mobilizing networks, have become an important channel through which young people seek voice and influence, and that such activities can be cultivated through Civic Education (Kahne et al., 2016). These findings reinforce the view that digital spaces are no longer merely communication media but have become one of the environments in which civic practices take place.

In a broader context, Alvinca & Suyato (2025) show that civic engagement within the context of digital citizenship encompasses interconnected social and political dimensions. Their study also demonstrates the breadth of research examining the relationship between digital citizenship and civic engagement. These findings are important for understanding that digital civic engagement cannot be limited to formal political participation but encompasses various social and public activities carried out through digital technologies.

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Thus, Generation Z's civic engagement patterns can be categorized into several forms, namely information consumption, expression of opinions, interaction and deliberation, content production, advocacy, and collective action. However, the level of digital activity does not necessarily indicate the depth of civic engagement. Liking, sharing content, or following an issue constitutes a form of digital activity, but more substantive engagement requires an understanding of the issue, information evaluation, communication with others, and actions oriented toward the public interest. This distinction mirrors the difference between latent and manifest forms of engagement (Ekman & Amnå, 2012).

The emergence of AI has made these patterns more complex. Generation Z can not only use social media as a space for civic engagement but also use AI to search for and process information, develop ideas, create content, and support advocacy activities. The reviewed evidence supports three characteristics most clearly: engagement is increasingly networked (Sari et al., 2025; Sobari, 2026), participatory in the sense of combining the consumption and production of information (Hariyanti et al., 2026; Tarsidi et al., 2023), and technology-mediated (Salsabila et al., 2026; Üstündağ et al., 2026). However, these characteristics need to be balanced with critical thinking skills so that digital engagement does not remain at the level of symbolic activity or even become a means of disseminating information that cannot be adequately verified or accounted for.

Implications of the Transformation of Civic Engagement for Civic Education

The transformation of Generation Z's civic engagement in the AI era has implications for the orientation of Civic Education. Changes in the civic environment indicate that young citizens no longer interact solely within conventional social and political spaces but also within digital spaces influenced by algorithms, social media, and AI. Therefore, Civic Education needs to develop students' abilities to understand civic issues while using technology critically, ethically, and responsibly.

One increasingly important competency is AI literacy as part of civic literacy. DiPaola et al. (2024) demonstrate that AI education can be connected to civic education through discussions of human rights, the impact of technology on rights, and AI regulation. Through such learning, AI is understood not merely as a technology to be mastered but also as a social phenomenon that has consequences for citizens' lives.

These implications are relevant to the changing patterns of Generation Z's civic engagement. When students use AI to seek information, understand public issues, create content, or communicate with the public, they need the ability to question the accuracy and credibility of the information they obtain. Therefore, AI literacy in Civic Education should be directed not only toward the operational ability to use AI but also toward the ability to understand the limitations, risks, ethical considerations, and social impacts of the technology.

Critical thinking skills are also becoming increasingly important. Latuconsina et al. (2026) demonstrate the importance of political literacy in helping Generation Z evaluate political information, particularly in an environment characterized by biased and manipulative information. In the context of AI, these abilities can be applied through learning activities that encourage students to compare information generated by AI with other sources, identify potential biases, examine evidence, and consider the context before drawing conclusions.

This is further supported by Salsabila et al. (2026) who examined the integration of AI into Pancasila and Civic Education learning at SMAN 1 Sleman. The study shows that AI integration can support civic literacy and critical thinking while maintaining ethical understanding and civic character as important components of learning. The study also indicates that critical AI literacy can serve as one approach to addressing risks emerging in the digital environment.

In addition to AI literacy and critical thinking, Civic Education needs to strengthen digital ethics. The technical ability to use AI does not automatically enable individuals to use it responsibly. Students need to understand issues such as privacy, copyright, information accuracy, the use of synthetic content, the dissemination of misleading information, and the impact of digital communication on others. This is consistent with Coeckelbergh (2025), who emphasizes the importance of active citizenship and Civic Education in ensuring that AI development remains connected to the common good and democratic processes.

Civic Education also needs to develop more participatory and contextual learning. Retnasari et al. (2025) found an association between digital literacy and Generation Z's civic engagement, while also identifying several barriers, including the dominance of social media algorithms, civic education approaches that have not fully responded to digital dynamics, and inequalities in access to technology. The study also highlights the importance of project-based learning that integrates Pancasila values. The inequality of access deserves particular attention because the digital divide concerns not only physical access but also differences in skills

and in the benefits people derive from technology (van Dijk, 2020); AI-responsive Civic Education must therefore avoid privileging students who already have better access to AI tools.

Putri et al. (2025) also emphasize the importance of adaptive, active, contextual, and technology-based Civic Education in strengthening Generation Z's civic engagement. Learning can be directed toward the use of social media, volunteer activities, and community-based civic projects. Through this approach, Civic Education not only provides knowledge about citizenship but also gives students opportunities to practice civic engagement as citizens.

The findings of Sobari (2026) also have practical implications for Civic Education. Generation Z's digital civics practices highlight the importance of digital political literacy, transparent access to information, channels for expressing aspirations, deliberation, and peer engagement. These conditions can be translated into learning activities through simulations of digital forums, analysis of public issues, AI-based information verification, the development of digital civic campaigns, and advocacy projects grounded in Pancasila values and democratic principles.

Thus, Civic Education in the AI era needs to move beyond an approach that emphasizes only the acquisition of civic knowledge toward learning that develops AI literacy, digital literacy, critical thinking, digital ethics, public communication, and civic engagement. The integration of these competencies is important so that students are not merely technology users but are also able to become active, critical, ethical, and responsible citizens in the digital environment.

Table 4. Implications of the Transformation of Civic Engagement for Civic Education

Changes in the AI Era	Competencies Needed	Implications for Civic Education
Public information is increasingly rapid and diverse	Information and AI literacy	Learning activities on source and information evaluation
Content can be generated by AI	Digital ethics and responsibility	Learning on ethical AI use
Public discussions increasingly take place in digital spaces	Communication and deliberation	Development of digital civic discussion forums
Misinformation and manipulation are becoming increasingly complex	Critical thinking and verification	Practice in examining and comparing information, including AI-generated content
AI can support advocacy	Public communication and ethical advocacy	Digital civic campaign and advocacy projects grounded in Pancasila values
Participation is becoming increasingly networked	Collaboration and civic engagement	Development of digital citizenship practices
Algorithms influence the flow of information	Algorithmic awareness	Critical analysis of social media and AI
Access to technology and AI is unequal	Digital inclusion and equity awareness	Inclusive learning designs that do not depend on paid AI tools

Source: Authors' synthesis based on DiPaola et al. (2024), Latuconsina et al. (2026), Putri et al. (2025), Retnasari et al. (2025), Salsabila et al. (2026), Sobari (2026), Coeckelbergh (2025), and van Dijk (2020).

Synthesis of the Discussion Findings

Based on the overall findings of the literature study, the transformation of Generation Z's civic engagement in the AI era can be understood through three major changes. First, there is a shift in the spaces of engagement, from physical and institutional spaces toward more open and networked digital spaces. Second, there is a shift in the ways of engagement, from conventional communication and participation toward the use of social media, civic technologies, and AI to access information, express aspirations, produce content, engage in discussions, conduct advocacy, and organize collective action. Third, there is a change in the capacity for engagement, as AI provides additional capabilities for rapidly processing and generating information.

These three shifts are summarized in the conceptual model presented in Figure 2. The model extends existing civic engagement frameworks in two ways. First, whereas Bennett et al. (2009) and Kahne et al. (2016) explain the move from institutional to networked and participatory engagement, the model adds the shift in capacity, which is specific to generative AI because citizens can now process and produce civic content with machine assistance. Second, the model positions civic competencies (AI literacy, critical verification, digital

ethics, and participatory skills) as the mediating condition that determines whether the three shifts result in meaningful engagement or in shallow and misinformed activity. This mediating role is the main point at which Civic Education can intervene.

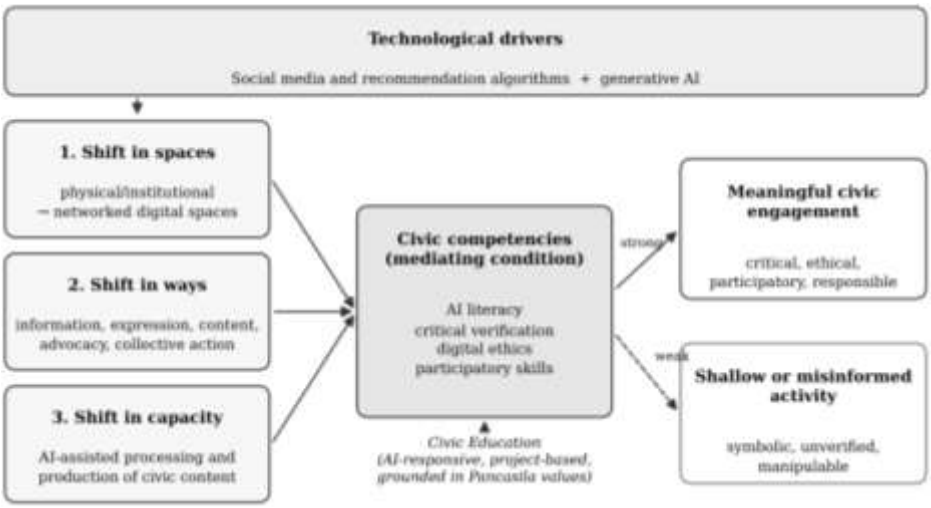


Figure 2. Conceptual Model of the Transformation of Generation Z's Civic Engagement in the AI Era

Source: Authors' synthesis.

However, the expansion of this capacity does not automatically result in more meaningful civic engagement. AI and digital media also present challenges related to misinformation, manipulation, privacy, bias, information credibility, and unequal access. The literature indicates that the quality of civic engagement is closely related to citizens' ability to understand and evaluate information. Therefore, civic engagement in the AI era needs to be understood as a process that combines access to technology with critical thinking, ethics, and civic responsibility.

From the perspective of Civic Education, these findings indicate the need to adjust competencies and learning practices. Civic Education needs to provide students with opportunities not only to understand AI but also to analyze its impacts on democracy, citizens' rights, public communication, and social life. The integration of AI literacy, digital literacy, critical thinking, digital ethics, and civic engagement experiences is essential so that Generation Z can use technology as a means of participation without losing sight of the values of Pancasila, democracy, social responsibility, and the public interest.

Thus, the transformation of Generation Z's civic engagement in the AI era is not merely a shift from offline to online activities, but rather a more fundamental change in how young people obtain information, engage in public communication, express their aspirations, build networks, and take action as citizens. Civic Education has a strategic role in ensuring that this transformation develops toward civic engagement that is critical, ethical, participatory, and responsible.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to synthesize how AI transforms Generation Z's civic engagement and what this implies for Civic Education. Regarding RQ1, the review identifies three interrelated shifts: in the spaces of engagement, from physical and institutional settings to networked digital spaces; in the ways of engagement, through social media, civic technologies, and generative AI used for information access, expression, content production, advocacy, and mobilization; and in the capacity of engagement, as generative AI accelerates the processing and production of civic content. Regarding RQ2, these shifts widen access and support advocacy but also intensify misinformation, manipulation, privacy risks, and unequal access, so that digital activity does not automatically constitute substantive civic engagement. Regarding RQ3, Civic Education needs to integrate AI literacy, critical verification, digital ethics, and project-based civic practice grounded in Pancasila and democratic values.

This review has limitations. The search process was not logged at the level of individual records, so the selection cannot be fully replicated. The corpus consists of 19 documents published between 2023 and 2026, more than half of which concern Indonesia, and only three of which are empirical studies addressing AI directly; direct evidence on Generation Z's own use of generative AI for civic purposes is therefore lacking, and the

three-shift model should be treated as a conceptual proposition. Future research should empirically examine how Generation Z students use generative AI in civic projects, test the mediating role of civic competencies proposed in the model, and evaluate AI-integrated Civic Education designs across diverse school contexts.

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