



## The Influence of Social Media Language on Generation Z Identity in Indonesia

**Anita Febiana Putri**

University of Muhammadiyah Tangerang

Email : [anitafebianaputri1@gmail.com](mailto:anitafebianaputri1@gmail.com)

**Bunga Malika Putri**

University of Muhammadiyah Tangerang

Email : [bungamalika27@gmail.com](mailto:bungamalika27@gmail.com)

**Erningsih Putri Suparman**

University of Muhammadiyah Tangerang

Email : [erningsihputris@gmail.com](mailto:erningsihputris@gmail.com)

**Wulan Astriani**

University of Muhammadiyah Tangerang

Email : [wulanastriani@umt.ac.id](mailto:wulanastriani@umt.ac.id)

**Nargis**

University of Muhammadiyah Tangerang

Email : [nargis@umt.ac.id](mailto:nargis@umt.ac.id)

Address: Jl. Perintis Kemerdekaan I No.33, RT.007/RW.003, Babakan, Cikokol, Kec. Tangerang, Kota Tangerang, Banten 15118

**Abstrak.** *This study explores the impact of social media language on identity formation among Generation Z in Indonesia, a demographic that has grown up in a digital landscape characterized by extensive online interactions. With approximately 202 million internet users in Indonesia as of 2023, social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter have become vital arenas for self-expression and cultural dialogue. The research employs a qualitative approach, utilizing semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and online observations to gather rich, contextual data from urban youth. Findings reveal that the dynamic linguistic landscape of social media—marked by the use of slang, memes, and code-switching—plays a crucial role in shaping personal and collective identities. Additionally, the study highlights the influence of local and global cultural trends, as well as the role of social media influencers in shaping youth perceptions of identity. The implications of these findings extend to educators, policymakers, and mental health professionals, emphasizing the need for a nuanced understanding of the challenges and opportunities presented by social media in the identity formation process.*

**Keywords:** *The Influence of Social Media; Language; Gen Z Identity.*

**Abstrak.** Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi dampak bahasa media sosial terhadap pembentukan identitas di kalangan Generasi Z di Indonesia, sebuah demografi yang tumbuh dalam lanskap digital yang ditandai dengan interaksi online yang luas. Dengan sekitar 202 juta pengguna internet di Indonesia pada tahun 2023, platform media sosial seperti Instagram, TikTok, dan Twitter telah menjadi arena penting untuk mengekspresikan diri dan dialog budaya. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif, dengan menggunakan wawancara semi-terstruktur, diskusi kelompok terarah, dan observasi online untuk mengumpulkan data yang kaya dan kontekstual dari kaum muda perkotaan. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa lanskap linguistik yang dinamis di media sosial—yang ditandai dengan penggunaan bahasa gaul, meme, dan pengalihan kode—memainkan peran penting dalam membentuk identitas pribadi dan kolektif. Selain itu, penelitian ini juga menyoroti pengaruh tren budaya lokal dan global, serta peran influencer media sosial dalam membentuk persepsi anak muda tentang identitas. Implikasi dari temuan ini meluas ke para pendidik, pembuat kebijakan, dan profesional kesehatan mental, yang menekankan perlunya pemahaman yang lebih mendalam mengenai tantangan dan peluang yang dihadirkan oleh media sosial dalam proses pembentukan identitas.

**Kata Kunci:** *Pengaruh Media Sosial; Bahasa; Identitas Gen Z.*

## INTRODUCTION

The rapid proliferation of social media has fundamentally transformed communication dynamics, particularly among Generation Z, who have grown up immersed in a digital environment characterized by instantaneous connectivity and extensive online interactions. This transformation is especially pronounced in Indonesia, where social media engagement has surged dramatically in recent years. As of 2023, Indonesia boasts approximately 202 million internet users, a significant portion of whom belong to Generation Z, positioning the country as one of the largest social media markets globally (Statista, 2023). Given this context, understanding the implications of this digital landscape on youth identity formation is crucial for both academic inquiry and practical applications.

Social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter have evolved into cultural arenas where users not only share personal narratives but also engage in critical dialogues surrounding identity, culture, and societal norms. For Generation Z, often labeled as "digital natives," social media transcends mere communication; it is a vital component of their identity development. The language employed on these platforms—characterized by informality, playfulness, and rich cultural references—mirrors the distinct experiences and values of this generation (Miller et al., 2021). This linguistic landscape is not static; it is dynamic and constantly evolving, reflecting the rapid changes in societal attitudes, cultural trends, and technological advancements.

In Indonesia, the linguistic landscape of social media is a vibrant tapestry woven from local dialects, Indonesian, and English, often infused with slang and colloquialisms that resonate with the youth. This linguistic diversity not only facilitates personal expression but also cultivates a sense of belonging among users who share similar cultural backgrounds. The fluidity of language on social media empowers Generation Z to navigate various cultural identities, oscillating between traditional norms and contemporary values. This dynamic interplay raises essential questions about how linguistic choices shape self-conception and social interactions, particularly in a multicultural society like Indonesia.

Language serves as a powerful instrument for identity construction, enabling individuals to articulate their thoughts, beliefs, and affiliations. For Indonesian Generation Z, the language of social media plays a pivotal role in shaping their identities. The use of slang, memes, and emojis can signify belonging to specific social groups or cultural movements, while also providing a platform to challenge societal norms. The rise of LGBTQ+ activism in Indonesia exemplifies this phenomenon, as social media language is harnessed to advocate for rights and visibility, thereby influencing the identities of those involved (Kusumaningrum, 2022).

Moreover, the rapid evolution of language on social media reflects broader societal changes. As Generation Z engages with global trends, they adopt and adapt linguistic features that resonate with their experiences. This phenomenon is particularly evident in the incorporation of English and other foreign languages, which can symbolize modernity and a departure from traditional constraints. However, this linguistic shift raises concerns about cultural homogenization and the potential erosion of local languages and dialects, which are integral to Indonesia's rich cultural heritage (Sari, 2020).

The influence of social media extends beyond language to encompass the role of influencers and content creators, who wield significant power over their audiences. For Generation Z, these figures often serve as role models, shaping perceptions of beauty, lifestyle, and identity. The language utilized by influencers—through captions, comments, and videos—

sets trends that resonate with their followers, creating a ripple effect that further shapes collective identity among youth (Abidin, 2016).

In this context, the present study aims to explore the intricate relationship between social media language and identity formation among Generation Z in Indonesia. By examining the unique linguistic characteristics of social media and their impact on personal and collective identities, this research seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of how Indonesian youth navigate their identities in a multicultural landscape. Through this exploration, the study will address critical questions regarding the influence of social media interactions on cultural and personal identity perceptions, ultimately shedding light on the complexities of identity formation in the digital age.

As we delve into this multifaceted topic, it is essential to consider the psychological implications of social media language on identity formation. The constant comparison to curated online personas can lead to feelings of inadequacy among youth, while the anonymity afforded by social media can result in both positive and negative outcomes. This research will not only highlight the linguistic dimensions of identity formation but also explore the broader societal and psychological contexts that shape the experiences of Generation Z in Indonesia. By doing so, it aims to provide valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and mental health professionals, fostering a more nuanced understanding of the challenges and opportunities presented by the digital age.

## THEORETICAL REVIEW

This theoretical study examines the influence of social media language on the formation of Generation Z identity in Indonesia through three main theories. **Social Identity Theory** posits that individual identity is shaped by group memberships, significantly influenced by interactions on social media (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). **Language and Identity Theory** suggests that language choices reflect social and cultural identities, encompassing dialects and code-switching (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). Lastly, **Media Ecology Theory** emphasizes that social media as a communication medium affects how individuals perceive and interact with the world, thereby shaping their identities (McLuhan, 1964). Together, these theories provide a comprehensive framework for analyzing Generation Z's identity dynamics in a digital context.

## RESEARCH METHOD

The research adopts a qualitative approach, which is particularly well-suited for exploring complex social phenomena such as identity formation in the context of social media. Qualitative research allows for an in-depth understanding of participants' perspectives, experiences, and the meanings they ascribe to their use of social media language (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The qualitative approach is complemented by a case study design, focusing specifically on Generation Z in Indonesia. This design enables the researcher to delve deeply into the unique cultural and social contexts that shape the identities of Indonesian youth, thereby providing rich contextual insights that quantitative methods might overlook.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that the unique linguistic characteristics of social media, including slang, code-switching, and cultural references, significantly shape Generation

Z's personal and collective identities. Social media platforms act as cultural spaces where local and global influences merge, enabling youth to navigate complex cultural identities.

## CONCLUSION

This study highlights the significant role of social media language in shaping identity formation among Generation Z in Indonesia. The findings reveal that social media platforms serve as crucial cultural spaces where youth navigate their identities through dynamic linguistic practices, including slang, memes, and code-switching. These platforms enable Indonesian youth to blend local cultural expressions with global influences, fostering a multifaceted sense of self. Additionally, the influence of social media figures plays a pivotal role in shaping perceptions of identity and lifestyle, often leading to pressures related to self-esteem and conformity. Recognizing these complexities is essential for educators, policymakers, and mental health professionals to support youth in their digital interactions. Future research should continue to explore the evolving nature of social media language and its implications for identity, contributing to a deeper understanding of the interplay between language, culture, and identity in a globalized context.

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