



The Documentary Film 'Dirty Vote' and Its Role in Shaping Political Knowledge and Voter Decisions Among Generation Z: A Qualitative Investigation

Yoma Bagus Pamungkas*, Yuwanto Yuwanto, Muhammad Adnan and Nurul Hasfi
Universitas Diponegoro
Semarang, Indonesia

*yomabagusamungkas@students.undip.ac.id

Abstract. The effect of the documentary *Dirty Vote* on improving political knowledge and changing voting behavior among Generation Z in Indonesia's 2024 General Election is under inquiry in this paper. Given 22.85% of registered voters, Gen Z is the main emphasis. Under the direction of Dandhy Dwi Laksono, the film explores delicate subjects including vote manipulation, election fraud, and power abuse. With 6.4 million views in two days, going viral generated intense discussion among youthful viewers. The study looked at how the documentary changed voters' political knowledge and attitudes by means of qualitative techniques and in-depth interviews. Results show that *Dirty Vote* effectively boosted awareness of real-world political dynamics, supported critical opinions on electoral integrity, and increased desire in active voting engagement. For Generation Z, who are strongly linked to digital platforms, the results confirm that visual materials such as documentaries can be effective political teaching tools. To enable young people in making educated and responsible voting decisions, researchers advise including related media in both official and non-formal political education campaigns. The study emphasizes the need for changing political communication approaches by using media in line with the tastes of the digital generation.

Keywords: Documentary Film, Political Knowledge, Voting Decisions, Generation Z.

1 Introduction

As digital technologies change media consumption, political literacy among young people has become more critical. Born 1997–2012, Generation Z presently has great influence on Indonesia's democratic processes. Gen Z will account for 22.85% of the 204.8 million voters in the 2024 General Election, nearly 46.8 million possible ballots per official data from the General Election Commission (KPU) [1]. The voter register also reveals an almost equal gender split: 102.2 million men and 102.5 million women [2], therefore highlighting Gen Z's importance as a major cohort. The great reliance of this generation on internet channels for political news generates both possibilities and dangers. Although social media provides quick access to knowledge, its unbridled character exposes Gen Z to false information and deception, which could skew their perspective of political problems [3]. Experts advocate using immersive forms like

documentary films to provide complex political education, an approach that fits Gen Z's taste for visual and consumable content [4], in order to offset this.

Documentaries have been shown to be a potent vehicle for presenting fact-based, hard-hitting political criticisms. One excellent example is the Dandhy Dwi Laksono-directed *Dirty Vote*. Through well-researched stories, this movie clearly reveals electoral behaviors ranging from systematic vote fraud to power abuse [5]. Including eminent legal academics such as Zainal Arifin Mochtar and Bivitri Susanti not only provides professional endorsements but also gives the results of the research credibility through their critical analysis. Amazing is what you have here. Within just two days of its premiere, the video attracted over 6.4 million views, which amply demonstrates the public's growing need for electoral openness [5]. This phenomenon emphasizes how films build political knowledge among young viewers and inspire Generation Z to actively protect election procedures, therefore transcending their simple documentation of facts.

This paper uses the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) as its theoretical framework to better grasp how *Dirty Vote* might affect political knowledge. Designed by Petty and Cacioppo, ELM distinguishes two information processing routes: the central route and the peripheral route [6]. The major path is critical and in-depth processing whereby people carefully review material and combine it with their current knowledge. In this regard, *Dirty Vote* is expected to involve Generation Z in central route processing, therefore improving their knowledge of electoral concerns and motivating them to scrutinize the data they come across [6].

Documentaries, which are typically seen as more credible and accessible than conventional media channels, are clearly preferred by Generation Z for independent and visually driven information [7]. Pew Research Center data show that this generation believes more in fact-based visual media [4], so supporting this inclination. Therefore, *Dirty Vote* not only has great relevance but also shows great efficacy in delivering critical political information to Generation Z by means of factual content presented via an investigative journalistic approach. This helps to increase political knowledge while preserving emotional resonance, a mix that fits very well with the tastes and features of this generation.

Though films have great promise as instruments for political education, especially in the Indonesian setting, there is still a clear dearth of studies looking at their effect on Generation Z's political knowledge. This disparity is noteworthy since encouraging young voters to have a better knowledge of politics will help the democratic system to grow more open and responsible [8]. With an eye toward how they may raise more political knowledge and participation among Generation Z in Indonesia, this study aims to close this divide by looking at the function of political education via films.

Particularly in view of Generation Z's growing inclination for credible and aesthetically appealing information, the necessity for efficient political education media is becoming ever more critical. In this sense, documentaries have become quite a successful tool for meeting young people's informational requirements. Generation Z often gravitates

toward emotionally relevant but also factually correct material. Erkan and Evans' studies highlight how better visual and fact-based content captures Generation Z's attention more than more conventional, text-heavy formats [7]. Documentaries like *Dirty Vote* highlight this tendency by providing an interactive and interesting experience that fits perfectly with the tastes of this age for learning.

With a special focus on Generation Z, this paper aims to significantly contribute to the field of political education by supporting the idea that films using the central route of the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) might be effective instruments for political education. The results are expected to offer insightful analysis and suggestions for legislators and educational institutions, thereby helping them to create more pertinent and successful political education plans fit for the younger generation [6], [8].

This study emphasizes the possibilities of a documentary-based approach by tackling the urgent demand for political education strategies that fit the special traits of Generation Z. Such a strategy is expected to increase political knowledge among younger people, therefore arming them to become more informed and critical voters. This work mostly contributes theoretically by using the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) framework to political education via documentaries. This is expected to inspire more debate on how well visual media in the digital age raises political knowledge.

2 Methodology

This study uses the case study method, a qualitative approach, to investigate how the documentary film *Dirty Vote* shapes political knowledge and voter decision-making among Generation Z. The case study method was chosen since it helps a comprehensive and contextual understanding of real-life events, as stressed by Yin [9]. This method is especially appropriate for investigating the in-depth experiences of young people in absorbing difficult political messages, which quantitative approaches by themselves cannot completely reflect. This study uses the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) paradigm in its investigation of audience processing and internalizing of political communications. As Yin points out, the case study approach lets one thoroughly investigate particular events within their natural settings [9]. This technique also fits the suggestions of Creswell and Poth, who support similar strategies in knowing how media shapes personal views and behaviors [10].

Using purposive sampling, this study targets Generation Z respondents—that is, those born between 1997 and 2012—for sample selection. This selection method guarantees that participants actively consume political material and have pertinent experience connected to the research theme, such as having seen the documentary *Dirty Vote*. An age range of 18 to 25 years represents the core voting demographic of Generation Z in Indonesia; prior experience viewing the documentary; and active participation or demonstrated interest in political issues, shown by participation in student organizations, activism, or regular consumption of political news. These criteria were

developed to guarantee that the chosen informants could make significant and perceptive contributions to the study questions.

Ten informants in all were contacted for this study; the sample size was decided upon using the idea of data saturation, the point at which further interviews no longer produce fresh topics [11]. In qualitative research, this figure is regarded as adequate as the main objective is to obtain in-depth understanding instead of generating statistical generalizations. While Creswell and Poth argue that small samples can remain useful as long as the gathered data can adequately reflect the phenomenon under research [11], Yin underlines in case studies that the quality of data is more important than the number of informants [9].

Aiming to investigate in-depth how the documentary affected the political knowledge and voter decision-making of the respondents, data collection was done through semi-structured in-depth interviews. Every interview lasted over forty minutes and was videotaped under the informants' permission. Designed based on the components of ELM, the interview questions focused mostly on motivation and aptitude in processing messages, as Petty and Cacioppo [6] and [12] described. Among the questions posed during the interviews were ones that caught the respondents' interest in Dirty Vote, how the documentary changed their opinions on political issues or the election process, and whether their assessment of political knowledge changed following film viewing.

Later, when examining the data, this study used thematic analysis like Braun and Clarke [11] created. The study started with non-verbatim transcription of the interview recordings and then coded the data to pinpoint salient political knowledge, information processing, and voter decision-making themes. Subsequently, the major and peripheral paths inside the ELM framework helped to group the developing topics. To reinforce the study, the results were combined with theoretical ideas derived from earlier works. While a whole approach advised by Merriam and Tisdell was applied to capture the interaction between individual, social, and situational factors in shaping political knowledge and voter decision-making [13], the coding process followed Saldaña's guidelines to identify patterns and key themes [14].

3 Results and Discussion

Through in-depth interviews with informants, the case study analysis of the documentary Dirty Vote reveals several important themes regarding its influence on political knowledge and voting decisions among Generation Z. These changes in political information processing following documentary viewing expose Information processing, the central pathway of the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), entails a critical review of the arguments given, as Stewart and Anderson clarify [15]. The answers of the informants clearly show this phenomenon: one participant said, "After watching this film, I became more thorough in examining the background and track record of potential leaders" (Informant 1, student, 21 years).

The thematic study of the interview transcripts shows that the documentary effectively induced a profound elaboration of comprehending election concerns (processing via the central pathway). The great degree of cognitive involvement recorded points to the message being processed using the central route of the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), which entails concentrated attention and active cognitive processing in receiving and assessing data [6]. The stories of the informants show how they started looking for more information and confirming facts after seeing the program. One informant said, for example, "I now always cross-check political news I come across on social media instead of accepting it at face value" (informant 3, private employee, 23 years).

Politically speaking, the results show that the documentary improved informants' awareness of the complexity of the election system. Interview results show how the film's narrative and visual evidence helped informants understand political ideas that were previously abstract. Thompson underlines that the employment of powerful visual and narrative components can help to provide a closer knowledge of difficult political problems [16]. "This film helped me understand how the electoral process works and what could make elections unfair," one activist, a 24-year-old informant, said.

The survey also revealed changes in the voting choices of the informants. ELM analysis revealed that the documentary pushed informants from depending on the peripheral route—that is, candidate popularity or appearance—to the center route in assessing possible leaders. Processing information through the central pathway is linked, Chong and Druckman suggest, with more careful and considered decision-making that results in better-informed and logical political judgments. [17] According to one informant, "I am no more swayed by grand campaign promises; now I focus more on realistic and measurable programs" (Informant 7, educator, 25 years).

The study revealed a major theme in motivating elements: informants reported more drive to participate in the political process following the documentary viewing. Petty, Cacioppo, and Goldman point out that a person's central or peripheral route of processing a message depends much on their motivation; higher motivation increases the possibility of central route processing [18]. Statements like "This film made me realize that my vote matters" (Informant 2, entrepreneur, 22 years) show increased personal significance, which stimulates more thorough discussion.

More study reveals variations in the political information-consuming tendencies of interviewees. In line with results by Stroud, exposure to high-quality documentary material can boost selective exposure to more reliable information sources [19]. "Now I am more selective in choosing political news sources, not just sharing or believing viral news," one informant said (informant 4, content producer, 23 years).

Particularly in the context of central route processing, the emotional dimension also becomes rather important for the process of message elaboration. Brader says that, given the emotional content does not overwhelm the major content of the message,

emotional appeals in political messaging might increase the incentive to participate in deeper processing [20]. One of the informants said, "This movie simultaneously made me feel enlightened and moved. The feelings that surfaced really helped me to grasp political concerns more profoundly (Informant 6, journalist, 24 years).

These results highlight the efficiency of documentaries as a tool for political education, especially in cases when the material is presented in a way that motivates thorough discussion. This case study shows that viewers are more likely to process information through the core route of ELM when political messages are presented in an interesting and believable manner, therefore impacting their political knowledge and decision-making procedures. As O'Keefe emphasizes, the success of media in political education depends on its ability to inspire cognitive elaboration combined with reliable information [21].

4 Conclusion

The conclusion of this research provides an abstraction of the results based on the theoretical framework used, therefore transcending a simple report of facts. The results show that, especially in forming the political perspective of younger generations, documentary media has great possibilities as a useful medium for political communication. Apart from raising political knowledge, videos like *Dirty Vote* can encourage critical thinking on political procedures and the need for honest elections. This study implies, among other things, the need for educational institutions and legislators to include narrative-based visual media in political education methods since this method can increase democratic involvement and raise the quality of voter decision-making. The way Generation Z consumes political information is one of the main conclusions of this research. Unlike previous generations, such as Baby Boomers, who often rely on traditional media due to the assumption that news has undergone editorial scrutiny, Generation Z shows a tendency to critically evaluate knowledge through the central route, as stated in the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM).

Viewing the documentary *Dirty Vote*, this study revealed that informants were more likely to perform extensive analyses of the political material they came across. Their changed behaviors of fact-checking and looking for reliable information before making political decisions clearly show this change. Reflecting both emotional and cognitive effects, the movie also inspired more desire to engage in the political process. These results are in line with Brader's studies [20], which underline how strongly emotionally resonant, politically charged messages can inspire people to analyze material more deeply. Regarding *Dirty Vote*, the emotional appeal was expressed by striking images and firsthand accounts of election injustices presented by professionals. This strategy made viewers sympathetic and angry about methods of election manipulation, which finally motivated them to independently check material and raise their knowledge of the need for political involvement.

In line with the conclusions of Pamungkas et al. [22], who discovered that the movie greatly enhances young voters' knowledge of the electoral system and the possibility for vote manipulation, the results of this study also show that Dirty Vote helps Generation Z to acquire better political knowledge. Based on their quantitative studies, viewers of Dirty Vote understood election concerns better than those who did not see the movie.

Furthermore, supporting Pamungkas et al. [22], who discovered that Dirty Vote greatly improves young voters' knowledge of the political system and possible vote manipulation, are these results. According to their research, viewers of the documentary understood election problems more strongly than those who did not. Furthermore, this study conforms with the findings of Hapsari & Pamungkas [23], which underlined how important audience cognition is shaped by argument quality and source credibility. Although their research concentrated on public health initiatives on social media, political documentaries like Dirty Vote, where audience impression is influenced by both factual arguments and expert credibility, utilize the same Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) procedures.

Moreover, this study conforms with the results of Stroud [19], which imply that consumption of high-quality media content might inspire a taste for reliable information sources. Within the framework of political education, the results of this study show that films such as Dirty Vote can be useful instruments for raising political literacy and hence improving the quality of democratic involvement among younger generations. Documentaries could be included in civic education courses at colleges and universities, together with critical debates following screenings to investigate the political concerns brought up in more detail, therefore maximizing their influence. In order to further students' awareness of the significance of honest and open elections, educational institutions should also plan group screenings followed by thought-provoking events, including professional speakers. This strategy is supposed to inspire young people to actively participate in democratic procedures and raise their curiosity in political concerns. Therefore, it is advised that legislators and educational institutions give documentary media first priority when developing creative and relevant political education plans catered to Generation Z.

References

- [1] Yolency, "Peran Penting Gen Z dan Milenial Menuju Tatahan Politik Baru pada Pemilu 2024," Situs Resmi Pemerintah Kabupaten Tuban, 2024. [Online]. Available: <https://tubankab.go.id/entry/peran-penting-gen-z-dan-milenial-menuju-tatanan-politik-baru-pada-pemilu-2024#:~:text=Sedangkan%20pemilih%20dari%20generasi%20Z,persen%20dari%20total%20keseluruhan%20pemilih>. [Accessed: Des. 08, 2024].
- [2] KPU RI, "DPT Pemilu 2024 Nasional 204,8 Juta Pemilih," Komisi Pemilihan Umum Republik Indonesia, 2 Jul. 2023. [Online]. Available: https://www.kpu.go.id/berita/baca/11702/dpt-pemilu-2024-nasional-2048-juta-pemilih?utm_source. [Accessed: Feb. 02, 2025].

- [3] Pew Research Center, "Generation Z Looks a Lot Like Millennials on Key Social and Political Issues," 2021.
- [4] A. Heywood, Politik. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2013.
- [5] D. D. Laksono, Dirty Vote, Film dokumenter, 2023.
- [6] R. E. Petty and J. T. Cacioppo, Communication and Persuasion: Central and Peripheral Routes to Attitude Change. New York: Springer, 1986.
- [7] I. Erkan and C. Evans, "The influence of eWOM in social media on consumers' purchase intentions," Computers in Human Behavior, vol. 61, pp. 47–55, 2020.
- [8] D. A. Scheufele and D. Tewksbury, "Framing, agenda setting, and priming," Journal of Communication, vol. 57, no. 1, pp. 9–20, 2007.
- [9] R. K. Yin, Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods, 6th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2018.
- [10] J. W. Creswell and C. N. Poth, Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design, 4th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2018.
- [11] V. Braun and V. Clarke, "Conceptual and design thinking for thematic analysis," Qualitative Psychology, vol. 8, no. 3, pp. 3–26, 2021.
- [12] N. J. Petty, O. P. Thomson, and G. Stew, "Introducing qualitative research methodologies and methods," Manual Therapy, vol. 17, no. 5, pp. 378–384, 2013.
- [13] S. B. Merriam and E. J. Tisdell, Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation, 4th ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2016.
- [14] Saldaña, The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers, 4th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2021.
- [15] A. Turner, "Generation Z: Technology and social interest," Journal of Individual Psychology, vol. 77, no. 2, pp. 127–141, 2021.
- [16] J. B. Thompson, The Media and Modernity: A Social Theory of the Media. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005.
- [17] D. Chong and J. N. Druckman, "Framing public opinion in competitive democracies," American Political Science Review, vol. 101, no. 4, pp. 637–655, 2007.
- [18] R. E. Petty, J. T. Cacioppo, and D. Goldman, "Personal involvement as a determinant of argument-based persuasion," Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, vol. 41, no. 5, pp. 847–855, 1981.
- [19] N. J. Stroud, "Media use and political predispositions: Revisiting the concept of selective exposure," Political Behavior, vol. 30, no. 3, pp. 341–366, 2008.
- [20] T. Brader, Campaigning for Hearts and Minds: How Emotional Appeals in Political Ads Work. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006.
- [21] D. J. O'Keefe, Persuasion: Theory and Research. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2002.
- [22] Y. B. Pamungkas, Y. Yuwanto, M. Adnan, and N. Hasfi, "Political knowledge and its effect on voting decisions: Generation Z viewers of *Dirty Vote* documentary," *Jurnal The Messenger*, vol. 16, no. 3, pp. 198–213, 2025.
- [23] R. Hapsari and Y. B. Pamungkas, "Audience cognition through elaboration likelihood model process: Instagram content of Indonesian Health Ministry on stunting phenomenon," *INJECT: Interdisciplinary Journal of Communication*, vol. 9, no. 1, pp. 85–104, 2024.

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits any noncommercial use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.

