

## POLITICAL MANIPULATION ON SOCIAL MEDIA: POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS, AND POTENTIAL REACTIONS

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### *Abstract*

This research examines the prevalent problem of political influence on social media platforms, its ramifications, and prospective reactions from Generation Z. Through an analysis of manipulation theories in the context of the digital era, including cognitive, emotional, and behavioral strategies, this study provides insights into the swift propagation of misinformation and the influence of algorithmic personalisation. This study conducts a comprehensive examination of relevant scholarly literature, with a particular focus on the impact of political misinformation on democratic processes. The subsequent analysis delves into the likely responses of Generation Z towards social media regulation, taking into account their inclination towards endorsing measures aimed at countering manipulation, while also expressing apprehensions over privacy and freedom of expression. This study highlights the significance of well-informed policy formulation in order to effectively tackle manipulation, while also taking into account the viewpoints of the younger demographic.

**Keywords:** Political manipulation, Social media, Generation Z.

**Jel Kodları:** Jel D72, Jel D79

## SOSYAL MEDYADA SİYASİ MANİPÜLASYON: POLİTİKA ÖNERİLERİ VE POTANSİYEL TEPKİLER

### *Öz*

Bu araştırma, sosyal medya platformlarında siyasi etkinin yaygın sorununu, sonuçlarını ve Z kuşağının olası tepkilerini incelemektedir. Bilişsel, duygusal ve davranışsal stratejiler de dahil olmak üzere dijital çağ bağlamında manipülasyon teorilerinin analizi yoluyla, bu çalışma yanlış bilginin hızlı yayılması ve algoritma tabanlı kişiselleştirmenin etkisi konusunda içgörüler sunmaktadır. Bu çalışma, demokratik süreçler üzerindeki siyasi yanlış bilgi etkisi üzerine ilgili bilimsel literatürün kapsamlı bir incelemesini gerçekleştirmektedir. Sonraki analiz, manipülasyona karşı önlem almaya yönelik önlemleri destekleme eğilimlerini dikkate alarak, Z kuşağının sosyal medya düzenlemelerine olası tepkilerine derinlemesine inmektedir, aynı zamanda gizlilik ve ifade özgürlüğü konusunda endişelerini de dile getirmektedir. Bu çalışma, manipülasyonla etkili bir şekilde mücadele etmek için iyi bilgilendirilmiş politika oluşturmanın önemini vurgularken, aynı zamanda genç nüfusun görüşlerini de dikkate almaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Siyasi manipülasyon, Sosyal medya, Z kuşağı.

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## **GİRİŞ**

The pervasive utilization of social media and the internet in the contemporary day has given rise to the prominence of disinformation propagation and manipulation as significant concerns within society. Social media manipulations have the potential to exert impact on the operation of democratic systems and individuals' decision-making processes, particularly within the realm of political processes. The utilization of concepts and theories related to manipulation in the context of the digital era, alongside scholarly investigations on political manipulations occurring on social media platforms, is gaining heightened significance. The primary objective of this study is to offer a complete examination of manipulation concepts and theories in order to enhance our comprehension of the impacts and ramifications associated with manipulation. Furthermore, its objective is to promote the advancement of scientific investigation into the consequences and ramifications of political endeavors.

The subsequent portions of this study examine the utilization of manipulation theories in the context of the digital era and the evolution of manipulation strategies on social media platforms. This section comprises debates pertaining to fundamental theoretical frameworks, specifically propaganda theories as proposed by Lasswell in 1927. The article additionally encompasses significant theoretical studies and discoveries within this domain, further exploring the theoretical underpinnings of political influence through social media. The present discussion focuses on the utilization of social media manipulations as examined in the study conducted by Woolley and Howard (2016). Additionally, the impact of these manipulations on election processes is explored based on the findings reported by Allcott and Gentzkow (2017). The present study elucidates significant works and findings by conducting a comprehensive analysis of the most recent literature listed in Web of Science, employing literature reviews as the primary methodological approach. This section encompasses theoretical frameworks pertaining to manipulation, as well as contemporary research on results (Marwick & Lewis, 2017).

The concluding section of the paper underscores the significance of scientific inquiry into the political impact on social media, as well as its implications for the decision-making processes and regulatory measures used by policymakers. Additionally, it furnishes information regarding potential responses of Generation Z towards legislation pertaining to social media, and aids in the development of efficacious approaches and regulations to address the impacts and ramifications of manipulation in the era of digital technology. Based on the results of this study, it is evident that the widespread occurrence of manipulation in the era of digital technology serves as evidence that manipulative practices on social media platforms might have significant ramifications for democratic systems. Hence, it is imperative for policymakers, society, and researchers to possess an understanding of the ramifications of manipulation and formulate efficacious approaches to counteract its influence. Furthermore, it is imperative to enhance the level of awareness regarding the utilization and manipulation of social media platforms among the younger cohorts. The results of this study can provide

valuable insights into the influence of manipulation on political processes within the digital era, hence aiding in the formulation of more efficacious legislation in this domain.

## **1. MANIPULATION CONCEPT AND THEORIES**

The significance of manipulation and its associated theories holds particular relevance within social and psychological domains. Cialdini (2001) posits that manipulation entails an endeavor by an individual to exert influence over another individual, aligning their actions and decisions with the manipulator's own goals. The examination of manipulation can be undertaken by analyzing power dynamics and patterns of interaction within interpersonal interactions. This section will examine the concept of manipulation and its relevance within the academic literature, along with the associated theories.

The discourse surrounding the phenomenon of manipulation has been the subject of extensive analysis across several academic disciplines, including psychology, communication, sociology, and politics. Turner (2014) posits that manipulation entails a deliberate endeavor by individuals or collectives to exert control over the cognitive processes, emotional states, and behavioral patterns of others. Within this particular framework, the act of manipulation can be perceived as being in opposition to moral and ethical tenets. However, it is worth noting that there are instances where manipulation may be regarded as an indispensable tool for fostering social cooperation and achieving harmony (Lynch, 2018). The objectives of manipulation study encompass comprehending the mechanisms employed in executing manipulative behaviors and scrutinizing their resultant impacts. The manipulation theories can be broadly classified into three primary divisions, namely cognitive, emotional, and behavioral manipulation theories.

Cognitive manipulation theories center on the systematic manipulation of individuals' thoughts and perspectives. According to the perspectives outlined by Petty and Cacioppo (1986), manipulators employ arguments and information as a means to exert influence over the viewpoints of their intended targets. One example of a prominent theory in psychology is cognitive dissonance theory, proposed by Festinger in 1957. According to this idea, individuals undergo cognitive dissonance when they are confronted with knowledge that contradicts their existing beliefs. Consequently, individuals are more inclined to modify their ideas and attitudes in order to alleviate cognitive dissonance. Cognitive manipulations are frequently employed in political communication, propaganda, and various advertising strategies (O'Keefe, 2002).

Theories on emotional manipulation focus on strategies employed to exert influence over the emotions and sentiments of individuals who are the intended recipients. According to the perspectives presented, those who engage in manipulation have the ability to influence the actions of their targets by eliciting feelings such as fear, guilt, happiness, love, or other affective states (Aronson et al., 2015). The idea of emotional events posits that emotional responses exert a substantial influence on individuals'

cognitive processes, including their perceptions, evaluations, and subsequent behavioral outcomes. Manipulators employ strategies aimed at altering the attitudes and behaviors of persons by seeking to exert influence over their emotional responses.

Behavioral manipulation theories center on the endeavors of manipulators to exert influence on the behaviors and activities of the individuals they target. According to the perspectives presented, those who engage in manipulation possess the ability to exert control over the actions of their targets through the utilization of social influence and power strategies (Raven, 1992). One example that illustrates the theory of conformity (Cialdini, 2001) is the notion that individuals frequently modify their behaviour in order to align with prevailing social norms within social circles and collectives. In this scenario, persons with manipulative tendencies have the ability to devise strategies for influencing behavior by leveraging the desire of target individuals to adhere to specific social groups.

The exploration of manipulation and its associated theories significantly enhances comprehension of interpersonal interactions and power dynamics. Cognitive, emotional, and behavioral manipulation theories encompass a range of methodologies and strategies that manipulators employ to exert influence over individuals. The concepts and hypotheses expounded in this section establish a fundamental structure for the investigation of manipulation, so serving as a foundation upon which forthcoming investigations might be constructed. Hence, it can be posited that additional investigation is necessary in order to attain a comprehensive comprehension of power dynamics, social interactions, and interpersonal relationships.

## **2. THE USE OF MANIPULATION THEORIES IN THE MODERN AGE**

The application of manipulation theories in contemporary society poses novel issues. The internet and social media platforms provide manipulators with the means to exert influence over specific individuals and extend their reach to a broader audience. However, the assessment of the impact and repercussions of manipulation has become increasingly challenging (Marwick & Lewis, 2017). This part will examine the application of manipulation theories in contemporary society, with a specific focus on the influence of the internet and social media in shaping manipulation strategies.

Cognitive manipulation techniques can be employed in diverse circumstances within the digital era. In contemporary society, manipulative persons employ internet platforms and social media as means to exert influence over the perspectives and convictions of specific individuals (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017). Within the context of the contemporary digital era, several prominent mechanisms of cognitive manipulation have emerged, including algorithmic personalization, filter bubbles, and the dissemination of disinformation (Zuboff, 2019).

The capacity to manipulate individuals' emotions over the internet has witnessed a growth in tandem with the advancement of the digital era (Tandoc et al., 2018). The impact on the emotions and sentiments of target audiences can be altered, particularly when employing narratives, visual media, and

other forms of content that emphasize emotions (Papacharissi, 2015). Furthermore, by employing techniques such as social engineering and online reputation management, individuals who seek to manipulate others can more effectively employ strategies of emotional manipulation (Hahnagy, 2011). The utilization of behavioral manipulation strategies has emerged as a pivotal milestone in the era of digital advancements. According to Tucker et al. (2018), the advent of online platforms and social media has facilitated the expedited and effortless access of manipulators to the behaviors of their intended targets. According to Walther (2011), the presence of social media features can have an impact on the actions of those being targeted, thereby enhancing their likelihood of conforming to societal norms and gaining acceptance from their peers.

In summary, the theories and techniques of manipulation have undergone transformation in the era of digital technology. It is crucial to comprehend their utilization and impact on social interactions and power dynamics. By directing attention towards various modalities of manipulation and the instruments employed by manipulators to attain their objectives, it becomes possible to formulate efficacious tactics and policies aimed at mitigating the adverse consequences of manipulation in the contemporary digital era. To gain a comprehensive understanding of the impacts of manipulation and the mitigation of power dynamics, it is important to undertake an analysis of the diverse manifestations of manipulation and the strategies employed by manipulators to accomplish their objectives. By adopting this approach, it becomes possible to formulate efficacious methods and policies aimed at mitigating the adverse consequences associated with manipulation within the context of the digital era. Furthermore, those that engage in manipulation tactics might employ many strategies, like gamification and customization, to exert influence over the motivation and actions of their subjects (Deterding et al., 2011).

The assessment and comprehension of the consequences of manipulation encounter supplementary obstacles in the digital era owing to the influence of ideas surrounding online manipulation. According to Vosoughi et al. (2018), the influence of online manipulation can extend to a wider range and have a more profound effect on individuals' beliefs, emotions, and behaviors. One notable impact of misinformation and conspiracy theories disseminated via social media platforms is their potential to shape the political, social, and scientific ideologies of individuals and communities (Lewandowsky et al., 2017). The implications of this phenomenon can be far-reaching for democratic processes, the formation of public sentiment, and the maintenance of societal unity (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017).

The utilization and comprehension of manipulation theories in the era of digitalization signify a significant juncture. The utilization of internet and social media platforms enables manipulators to effectively target their desired audiences and exert a broader influence, hence complicating the assessment of the ramifications of manipulation. The analysis offered in this section offers a comprehensive examination of the utilization of manipulation theories in the context of the digital era,

as well as the resulting implications. The implications and ramifications of manipulation in the digital era need the implementation of efficacious regulations and methodologies in this domain, with future investigations being imperative.

### **3. POLITICAL MANIPULATION IN SOCIAL MEDIA**

Social media platforms provide a conducive environment for the efficient execution and widespread dissemination of political manipulation. According to Woolley and Howard (2016), the utilization of online platforms facilitates the accessibility of manipulators to effectively engage and influence their intended target audiences. This section will undertake an analysis of theoretical literature pertaining to political manipulation on social media, with a specific emphasis on the techniques and methodologies employed by political actors and their adherents.

According to Karpf (2016), political manipulation theories propose that individuals who engage in manipulation tactics exert deliberate efforts to exert influence over the cognitive processes, affective states, and behavioral tendencies of their targets. These concepts imply that a range of techniques and approaches, including propaganda and the utilization of state-sponsored social media trolls, are employed in the realm of political manipulation. The term "cognitive political manipulation on social media" pertains to the various strategies employed to exert influence over individuals' political beliefs and understandings. The utilization of misinformation, fake news, and political conspiracies has been identified as strategies employed to accomplish these manipulations (Lewandowsky et al., 2017). According to Allcott and Gentzkow (2017), the utilization of social media platforms facilitates the rapid dissemination of such content to wide-ranging audiences.

The subject of inquiry is to the techniques employed by individuals seeking to exert control over the political sentiments and viewpoints of specific individuals within the realm of social media. According to Marwick and Lewis (2017), the utilization of provocative headlines, contentious language, and emotionally charged written and visual information can be employed as a means of manipulating individuals. The aforementioned strategies are specifically crafted to either bolster the political convictions of the targeted individuals or provoke animosity and bias towards rival factions (Sunstein, 2018).

The examination of political influence via social media is a significant domain of study and a subject of policy considerations. Social media platforms provide political actors and their supporters the means to employ deceptive strategies in order to exert influence over specific target audiences. This section undertakes an examination of theoretical literature pertaining to the impact of political influence on social media platforms, and subsequently offers suggestions for future research endeavors and the formulation of policies within this domain. Further investigation and the formulation of efficacious strategies and policies will be imperative in comprehending and addressing the ramifications and implications of social media and its role in political influence.

#### **4. LITERATURE REVIEW**

The present study conducts a comprehensive review of the existing literature in order to synthesize and analyze the current state of knowledge on the chosen topic. This section aims to critically assess the existing body of literature pertaining to publications in Web of Science, the notion of manipulation, digital applications, and more especially, the literature concerning political manipulation in social media. In their study, Vrij et al. (2020) aimed to examine the efficacy of manipulation strategies at both individual and social levels. The researchers found three primary categories of manipulation theories, namely cognitive, emotional, and behavioral. The study conducted by Vosoughi et al. (2018) examined current research findings and presented evidence that false information propagates more rapidly and reaches a larger audience compared to accurate information. This underscores the efficacy of manipulation theories in the context of the digital era.

The examination of algorithmic personalization and filter bubbles in social media, as discussed by Zuboff (2019) and Pariser (2011), offers valuable perspectives on the mechanisms employed for cognitive manipulation in the contemporary digital era. The study conducted by Allcott and Gentzkow (2017) investigated the effects of political misinformation and fake news disseminated via social media platforms on democratic processes and social cohesion. This study demonstrates that social media platforms offer a conducive environment for the dissemination and impact of political manipulation. Woolley and Howard (2016) conducted a significant investigation into the increasing prevalence of political influence inside the realm of social media. This study demonstrates that the presence of political bots and state-sponsored trolls has a substantial impact on individuals' political beliefs and affiliations. The scholarly works conducted by Vrij et al. (2020) and Vosoughi et al. (2018) offer valuable perspectives on the evolution and ongoing efficacy of manipulation theories and tactics within the context of the digital era. Furthermore, scholarly investigations conducted by Allcott and Gentzkow (2017) as well as Woolley and Howard (2016) underscore the significance of conducting additional research pertaining to the impacts and ramifications of political influence on social media platforms.

Upon examining the relevant literature within our country, namely Çam (2018), Keser (2017), Selvi (2020), Şahinbaş (2016), Yüceel (2019), and Zubair (2017), it becomes evident that the major focus lies in exploring the correlation between social media usage and political engagement. These studies mostly concentrate on university students belonging to Generation Z in terms of their research area. All of the aforementioned investigations were carried out utilizing either online or in-person survey methodologies. Although the studies under consideration share similarities in terms of their samples, ideas, and research goals, it is evident that they yielded divergent outcomes. Selvi (2020) has determined that the correlation between social media usage and political engagement in Generation Z is constrained. Conversely, Keser (2017) has established a robust association between social media and political activity, as well as information searching, among the youth. Yüceel (2019), conversely, posited that a notable correlation between social media consumption and political participation is absent. Çam (2018)

offered a critique of the existing literature that posits Generation Z as apolitical, and instead argued that this generation exhibits a higher degree of political engagement than previously believed. According to the findings of Şahinbaş (2016), the political engagement and self-expression of Generation Z are constrained as a result of a prevailing sense of mistrust. According to Zubair's (2017) study, there exists a range of political involvement levels among those belonging to Generation Z, which can be attributed to cultural and economic influences. The lack of consistency in the outcomes of studies employing identical quantitative fieldwork may be attributed to variations in researchers' methodological approaches or potential inaccuracies in data collection from the research population.

The scholarly investigations undertaken by Mınarlı (2019) and Ün (2021) focused on examining the political influence of social media usage, specifically within the realm of Twitter. These studies employed content analysis as their primary research methodology. Both studies examined the 2018 Presidential election in Turkey, albeit with distinct emphases in the existing body of literature. Mınarlı (2019) conducted an inquiry into the correlation between social media and democracy, specifically focusing on the analysis of hate speech outbursts during electoral campaigns. The analysis determined that while political content centered around elections may indeed elicit associations with democracy, social media falls well short of serving as a viable substitute platform for democratic processes. In a similar vein, Ün (2021) conducted a study that examined the relationship between the frequency of Twitter posts by political groups and their electoral performance in the 2018 Presidential election. The findings of this study revealed a significant correlation between a decrease in the volume of Twitter activity by political groups and an increase in their electoral success. The detrimental effects of political manipulation, social media bots and troll accounts, big data, and algorithms on democracy and the public sphere have been established through conclusive findings. The existing body of research in the national literature exhibits limitations in both methodological and subject coverage. Conducting comprehensive study on the utilization of social media and political engagement among Generation Z is imperative in order to make a valuable contribution to the existing body of literature. Hence, it is considered imperative to employ qualitative research methodologies that thoroughly investigate the phenomenon.

Upon examining the worldwide literature, it becomes evident that the subject matter encompasses a wider range, the methodologies employed exhibit greater diversity, and there is a heightened level of depth. The research undertaken by Lynch and Hogan (2012) aimed to investigate the communication strategies employed by political parties in Ireland when engaging with young voters on social media platforms. The study employed both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies. Data gathering strategies utilized in this study included survey and open-ended focus group interview formats. The research findings indicate that political parties have not been able to effectively harness their potential in wooing voters. Furthermore, the findings from the focus group interviews indicate that persons belonging to Generation Z exhibit a preference for interpersonal communication, namely face-to-face connection. However, political parties are actively seeking novel avenues for engagement, particularly through the utilization of social media platforms. The study undertaken by Lailiyah, Pradhana, and

Yuliyanto (2020) aimed to investigate the manner in which Generation Z perceives and assesses political content disseminated through social media platforms. The study employed quantitative methodologies and utilized surveys as instruments for data collecting. A socializing training session was initially provided with a focus on social media. The findings of the study revealed a favorable influence on the political behavior and attitudes of the respondents who were involved in the survey both prior to and subsequent to the instructive training. The study conducted by Alfred and Wong (2022) aimed to investigate the correlation between the perception and trust of Generation Z in social media platforms and their engagement in political activities. The study employed quantitative methodologies and utilized surveys as instruments for data gathering. The findings of the study suggest that individuals belonging to Generation Z exhibit a considerable degree of faith in social media platforms when it comes to engaging in political activities. Furthermore, a significant correlation exists between political engagement and the level of trust individuals place in social media platforms. The study conducted by Tandon, Singh, and Tripathi (2022) examined the utilization of politically humorous pictures on social media platforms among Generation Z persons residing in Delhi. The study employed quantitative methodologies and utilized surveys as instruments for data collecting. Based on the findings of the study, it has been observed that the act of posting political pictures containing hilarious elements on social media platforms serves as a means for Generation Z individuals to articulate their oppositional stance and establish outlets for self-expression. In a study undertaken by Jago (2022), an investigation was carried out to examine the assertion that algorithms have a detrimental impact on the religious beliefs and practices of individuals belonging to Generation Z. This study adopts a conceptual technique. The present study posits that artificial intelligence algorithms have a discernible impact on the secularization tendencies observed in Generation Z.

The investigations conducted by Bradshaw and Howard (2018) and Bradshaw (2020) are considered to be very thorough and authoritative sources on the subject of social media manipulation and tools. These studies effectively organize and provide a substantial amount of material in a coherent and organized manner. In their study on organized social media manipulation, Bradshaw and Howard (2018) employed qualitative methodologies and content analysis as a means of data collecting. The paper asserts that states are forming cyber armies with the intention of engaging in political manipulation, which presents significant threats to democratic systems in the coming years. In their seminal publication, Bradshaw et al. (2020) presented a comprehensive and significant scholarly work that delves into the capacity and organizational aspects of misinformation and systematic manipulation inside individual nations. Detailed information on the utilization of manipulation tools, the quantity of organizations involved, their respective functions, and the levels of effectiveness exhibited by these tools are furnished. In the context of Spain, it is noted that the nation has little capability for social media manipulation, with heightened activity observed during electoral cycles, notably within regions

characterized by separatist movements. The majority of studies found in the existing literature mostly concentrate on macro-level approaches to the phenomenon.

Based on the comprehensive analysis of existing scholarly works, it can be inferred that the reviewed research encompass a wide range of topics pertaining to the intersection of social media and politics. These include political participation, manipulation, political perception, democracy, and cybersecurity. Hence, it is deemed imperative to examine the contextual aspects of political manipulation on social media, particularly through the lens of Generation Z, within the framework of phenomenological research. This endeavor will make a valuable contribution to the existing body of literature in terms of its originality. The assessment of Generation Z's perspective on political manipulation through social media should not be limited to a just momentary examination. The investigation on Generation Z's view of political influence on social media will yield valuable insights into the various dimensions of this phenomena and how they are interpreted. Moreover, the perspectives of Generation Z on online political discourse hold significant relevance in molding forthcoming ideologies. There is a prevailing notion that forthcoming investigations in these domains possess the capacity to center their attention on comparison analysis across various age cohorts, employing qualitative research methodologies that facilitate a comprehensive exploration of the occurrences. Alfred and Wong (2022), Bradshaw and Howard (2018), Bradshaw et al. (2020), Lailiyah, Pradhana, and Yuliyanto (2020), and Tandon, Singh, and Tripathi (2022) employed both conceptual and empirical approaches to investigate the interplay between Generation Z and social media, social media manipulation, and cybersecurity. Nevertheless, it is widely believed that these research exhibit a deficiency in comprehensive data richness that integrates these ideas. In their study, Lynch and Hogan (2012) employed a mixed methods approach to enhance the comprehensiveness of their data collection. While their efforts resulted in a robust dataset, it is worth noting that they did not demonstrate a definitive correlation between social media manipulation and Generation Z. Based on the aforementioned discoveries, it is hypothesized that our proposed study will address the observed deficiency in the existing body of knowledge. Researchers are likely to employ qualitative research methodologies and engage in comparison studies across several age cohorts, with the aim of maximizing the depth and breadth of available data. The aforementioned studies conducted by Alfred and Wong (2022), Bradshaw and Howard (2018), Bradshaw et al. (2020), Lailiyah, Pradhana, and Yuliyanto (2020), and Tandon, Singh, and Tripathi (2022) employed both conceptual and empirical approaches to examine the correlation between Generation Z and various aspects of social media, including social media manipulation and cybersecurity. However, it is argued that these studies lack a comprehensive analysis of micro-scale deep data.

## **5. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNTER POLITICAL MANIPULATION ON SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS**

Anticipated advancements in these domains are poised to gain broader traction through prioritizing extant research, refining methodology, and cultivating novel techniques for assessing the impacts and ramifications of manipulative concepts and behaviors. This research has the potential to assist regulators and policymakers in formulating efficient policies and strategies to combat the impacts and repercussions of manipulation in the digital era.

Regulators and politicians express substantial worries regarding the prevalence and consequential effects of political influence on social media platforms. In the present phase of the discourse, the primary emphasis will be placed on proposing policy suggestions pertaining to the imperative for politicians to undertake actions aimed at mitigating political influence on social media platforms. The promotion and augmentation of digital media literacy education can assist policymakers in fostering the development of critical thinking abilities among politicians when confronted with manipulative content (Hobbs, 2010). These courses aim to strengthen the fundamental skills of fact-checking, source verification, and the capacity to comprehend and identify instances of information manipulation. For further insights into the field of education and digital literacy, readers are encouraged to consult Buckingham's (2007) publication titled "Digital Media Literacies: rethinking media education in the age of the Internet." By adopting this approach, individuals can enhance their resilience against the impacts of manipulation.

By enacting stringent laws and regulations, legislative bodies and policymakers have the authority to combat the spread of misleading information and put a stop to it. According to Pennycook and Rand (2019), an increase in the dependence on the identification and removal of erroneous information and content that is intended to manipulate will make social media platforms more effective. The establishment of legislation designed to increase the visibility of the algorithms utilized by social media platforms in order to determine the content that is displayed to users is one way to increase the level of transparency that may be achieved with regard to algorithmic practices. According to Eslami et al. (2015), the incorporation of this feature enables users to obtain insight into the motivations behind the information they encounter, making it easier to identify content that may be attempting to manipulate them. It is absolutely necessary for social media platforms to provide user access to fact-checking tools and actively promote the usage of these tools. According to Lewandowsky et al. (2012), the employment of this tool can be of assistance to users in expeditiously and effectively evaluating the reliability of material that has been shared. It is necessary for users to have a greater understanding of the treatment of their personal information because the issue of data privacy and user rights requires this. As a result, users will have a greater influence over how their information is used. According to Solove (2006), the application of this strategy is able to successfully reduce the incidence of individualized targeting in political manipulation, which can be very harmful.

More stringent legal rules are need to be put in place regarding the dissemination of political information and propaganda on social media platforms. This policy has the potential to increase the accountability of platforms in protecting users from material that has been manipulated. According to Caplan and boyd (2018), the restrictions could include the explicit identification of the origins of political adverts and material, in addition to the prevention of the spread of information that is misleading or erroneous. In the areas of fact-checking and media literacy, the role that organizations that are a part of civil society play as well as organizations that monitor the media play a significant role. According to Graves and Cherubini (2016), these organizations have the potential to conduct seminars that are centered on fact-checking and build relationships with social media platforms in order to protect consumers against manipulation. Policymakers should encourage transparency and accountability among social media platforms, and they should also encourage these platforms to actively monitor how their algorithms and data are being used. According to Zuboff (2019), the implementation of this strategy has the potential to reduce the impact that people who try to manipulate others have on social media platforms.

## **6. POTENTIAL RESPONSES OF GENERATION Z TOWARDS SOCIAL MEDIA LEGISLATION**

Generation Z, being individuals who have grown up in the digital age, exhibit a heightened awareness of the issue of manipulation on social media platforms. Consequently, their responses to rules aimed at addressing this problem might vary, encompassing both positive and negative reactions. The probable reactions of Generation Z can be evaluated in the following manner:

The provision of regulations is crucial in supporting various aspects of a system or industry. Regulations serve as a framework that establishes guidelines and standards. Given the awareness of Generation Z of the influence of manipulation on social media platforms, it is plausible that they possess the potential to advocate for legislative measures aimed at countering the dissemination of false information and fostering a culture of digital media literacy.

The Intersection of Privacy and Freedom: A Critical Analysis Nevertheless, it is plausible that individuals belonging to Generation Z harbor apprehensions over the potential curtailment of private rights and freedom of speech as a result of social media legislation. The establishment of equitable and impartial regulations by governing bodies is vital in order to ensure the preservation of individual freedoms and privacy rights (Bakır & McStay, 2018).

Generation Z has the potential to actively participate in the establishment of social media rules by advocating for politicians to implement more robust measures to combat manipulation and the dissemination of inaccurate information. One potential strategy for mitigating the negative effects of manipulation is individuals taking action within their communities and advocating for digital media literacy, as suggested by Livingstone et al. (2017). Generation Z demonstrates a remarkable ability to readily embrace novel technology and methodologies in their efforts to combat fraudulent activities and

the dissemination of false information. As an illustration, individuals have the capacity to proactively mitigate the dissemination of manipulative content through the utilization of AI-supported verification tools and content analysis systems (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017). Moreover, it is plausible that Generation Z possesses a heightened consciousness of digital literacy, which may therefore lead them to endorse social media regulations that strive to safeguard user privacy, thwart information manipulation, and foster digital literacy (Buckingham, 2007). In contrast, it can be observed that Generation Z places a significant emphasis on the importance of freedom of expression and the protection of individual rights (Twenge, 2017). If individuals regard social media rules as limiting their liberties or infringing upon their rights as users, they may be less inclined to endorse or advocate for such controls. This observation highlights the tendency of the younger generation to safeguard their digital liberties and the right to express themselves online (Brake, 2014). The extent to which Generation Z embraces social media regulations will be contingent upon the degree of alignment between these laws and their beliefs, objectives, and the specific provisions outlined within them. Hence, it is imperative to consider the perspectives and principles of the younger generation in order to ensure the efficacy and acceptability of social media regulations (O'Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011).

## **CONCLUSION**

In summary, it is imperative for both Generation Z and politicians to formulate efficacious tactics in order to counteract the impact of political manipulation on social media platforms. The implementation of legislation that upholds privacy and freedom rights, coupled with the encouragement of digital media literacy, can effectively mitigate the adverse effects of manipulation. Given the rapid progress of technology and the active engagement of Generation Z, it is plausible to assert that this cohort has the potential to exert significant influence in combatting the pervasive issues of manipulation and misinformation.

Further investigation is necessary in order to enhance comprehension of the concepts, principles, and practical implementations of manipulation, including its political manifestations within the realm of social media. These studies have the potential to offer crucial insights to politicians and regulators, enabling them to develop efficacious rules and strategies to combat the impacts of manipulation in the digital era. In brief, the efficacy and reception of social media legislation among Generation Z are contingent upon their congruence with the values and requirements of the youth demographic. The objective of legislation should be to augment the digital proficiencies of young individuals, shield them from hazards encountered online and preserve their entitlement to freedom of speech. Nevertheless, it is imperative to safeguard their digital liberties and uphold their rights to privacy. Various research approaches, including surveys, focus groups, and one-on-one interviews, can be employed to consider the perspectives and requirements of young individuals in the development and execution of legislation pertaining to social media.

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