Gen Z Voters' Political Perspectives In Tamil Nadu

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Abstract: This study examines the political perspectives of Generation Z voters (aged 18-25) in Tamil Nadu, especially in the Chengalpattu district, focusing on their engagement with digital politics, party preferences, and vision for future governance. Using qualitative analysis of open-ended surveys with 70 urban college students with both first-time and registered voters. The study highlights how this digitally native generation is reshaping Tamil Nadu's political landscape by merging Tamil identity consciousness with globalized policy expectations. The study also enlightens the social media influence of shaping the opinions of the Gen Z voters. The findings suggest political parties must urgently adapt to Gen Z's digital engagement patterns and substantive governance demands to remain electorally relevant. This research contributes to understanding Tamil Nadu's changing youth political behaviour in the social media era, with implications for democratic participation in regional politics.

Index Terms - Gen Z voters, Tamil Nadu politics, social media influence, youth political engagement, digital democracy

Introduction

The political engagement among youth has always been a crucial indicator of a democracy's health, and in contemporary Tamil Nadu, Generation Z voters (aged 18-25) are emerging as a significant demographic force in Tamil Nadu, where digitally native young adults perceive current politics, what influences their political opinions, and what they expect from future governance. Their perspectives gain special relevance in a state with a strong political legacy, where traditional party loyalties are now being questioned by a generation that grew up with smartphones and social media. This tech-savvy generation consumes, shares, and creates political content primarily through platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp, developing political consciousness outside traditional party structures. The digital political socialisation differs fundamentally from previous generations who relied on print media, television, and physical rallies. Their political worldviews are increasingly shaped by viral memes, influencer commentaries, and algorithm-driven content rather than party manifestos or ideological pamphlets. This raises critical questions about how political parties can authentically engage a generation that distrusts traditional political rhetoric but actively participates in digital activism and connects with today's Gen Z voters to engage them in politics.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

(Joseph B et al., 2024) in their study "Examining How Candidate Attributes Shape Gen Z Perceptions for the 2025 Philippine Senate Elections Using Conjoint Analysis" This study examines Gen Z's voting preferences in the 2025 Philippine Senate elections, finding that political experience and educational background are most influential, followed by stance on issues and party affiliation, with campaign style and age group being less significant, Gen Z voters in this study preferred candidates with substantial experience, advanced academic credentials, and a progressive stance on social and environmental issues, favouring digital over traditional campaign strategies. . These insights can be used by politicians to create focused campaign plans that highlight progressive policies, credentials, and online interaction in order to appeal to Gen Z values. By aligning

campaign approaches with Gen Z's expectations, candidates have a strategic opportunity to connect meaningfully with this emerging voting bloc in the Philippine political landscape

(Alifatunnisa et al., 2024) in their study "Political Communication Strategies in the Digital Era for Generation Z Voters" This study examines Generation Z's views on digital-era political communication strategies, finding that social media platforms effectively attract young voters with engaging content, humor, and direct interaction, but also highlights challenges like fake news and critical thinking skills. The findings demonstrated that political communication tactics utilising social media were successful in grabbing the interest of Generation Z. Young voters' curiosity is effectively piqued by engaging political messaging and visual content. According to the informants, the use of humour in political content and informal, familiar language had a significant impact on their participation. Social media-based political communication techniques work wonders for drawing in Generation Z. However, efforts need to be made to ensure the accuracy of information and build critical skills in assessing news, so that Generation Z can participate informally in the political process.

(Sumerta et al., 2024) in their study "Political Branding and the Gen Z Vote: A Phenomenological Study of Young Voters in Indonesia" This phenomenological study explores how political figure branding influences Generation Z's voting intentions in Indonesia's 2024 election, finding that realistic, charismatic, and ethical traits, along with close citizen connections, resonate strongly with young voters. Young voters emphasise that close-knit communities and realistic, charismatic, and moral qualities are highly appealing. Results can inform candidate positioning and campaign communication tactics for increased electoral engagement by shedding light on branding components that pique young people's interest.

(Laura M. and Robinson 2024) Digital participation, education, and politics in the U.S. 2024 election: Gen Z's gendered differences This study explores the gendered differences among Gen Z voters in the US presidential election of 2024, exposing connections between politics, education, and internet activity, revealing linkages between digital activities, education, and politics, with findings highlighting the impact of social media, gaming, and postsecondary educational trajectories on their political stances and identity projects. The first digital generation. This study, which focusses on a particular demographic, sheds light on the perspectives of Gen Zers who grew up in an agricultural region of California that was characterized by persistent economic uncertainty. The analysis uses Hochschild's ideas of the "pride paradox" and the "pride economy," which were inspired by her analysis of the "crisis of men" in relation to the U.S. election of 2024. In light of recent European elections, the study concludes with a discussion of the influence of digital activities on identity projects that might develop into political positions and the broad ramifications of these processes for Gen Z worldwide.

(Sitanggang et al., 2024) in their study "The Relationship between Political Image and Voting Behaviour in First-time Voters: Demographics of Generation Z Voters in the 2024 Election in Indonesia" The relationship between political image and voting behaviour in first-time voters is positively correlated. Focussing on a specific population, this study illuminates the viewpoints of Gen Zers who were raised in an agricultural area of California marked by ongoing economic instability. After Hochschild's analysis of the "crisis of men" in connection with the 2024 U.S. election, she developed the concepts of the "pride paradox" and the "pride economy," which are used in this analysis. The study ends with a discussion of the impact of digital activities on identity projects that could lead to political viewpoints and the wide-ranging implications of these processes for Gen Z globally, in light of the recent elections in Europe.

(Grassi et al., 2023) in their study "Young People's Attitudes towards Democracy and Political Participation: Evidence from a Cross-European Study" This paper found that the youngest adults are no less supportive of liberal democracy than older age groups, and that attitudes of opposition towards democracy decrease political mobilization, this association is independent of age, young people's critical views of democracy rarely translate into apathy for democracy. Individual characteristics of young people are likely to crystallise over time, but in particular situations, into distinct value configurations and democratic engagement patterns.

(Lal et al., 2023) in their study "Gen Z Attitudes Towards American Democracy and Reform" Political scientists have expressed concern about the current state of democracy in the United States, which is widely regarded as a pioneer in the modern democratic world. Gen Zers are concerned about the state of American

democracy and support reforming gerrymandering. Their opinions on other reforms are divided along partisan, the Gen Z and the young participants emphasis on the importance of civic engagement and media literacy education in high schools, in addition to the requirement for more thorough local and federal curriculum requirements.

(Robin et al., 2022)Gen-Z's perspective on politics in Indonesia is examined in the qualitative study "Gen-Z perspective on politics: high interest, uninformed, and urging political education," which finds high interest but perceived lack of information, negative views on political parties due to corruption, and a strong desire for political education, In political communication, research is often focused on strategies for or crafting stories that can be used to manipulate political perceptions to win over supporters or win votes. Only when they are aware of the target public's viewpoint can they accomplish these two goals. Thus, the purpose of this study is to ascertain Gen Z's viewpoint. Although Gen-Z feels ignorant, they have a strong interest in politics. Second, Gen-Z sees the existence of political parties in a negative light due to the high number of corruption cases, Third, Gen-Z urges for political education.

М. А. Бабаева (2022) in his study "Gen Z's Political Coming of Age During Quarantine in the COVID-19 Pandemic" this article, the authors explored how quarantine during the COVID-19 pandemic correlated with the political worldviews of Generation Z and shown that social media exposure was a significant factor in the political growth of Generation Z during the epidemic. In order to determine how the United States with Gen Z voters and lawmakers would develop in the future, the researcher sent an online survey to members of Generation Z in Broward County. The survey asked about the respondents' political beliefs, media engagement, civic engagement, and political confidence during the COVID-19 pandemic. It also highlighted the increasing impact of social media on social interactions throughout society.

(McBeth et al., 2021) in their study "Dalton and Putnam: Teaching Political Polarization to Generation Z Students" This article presented an approach to teach political polarization in an introduction to Students are assisted in reflecting on their own political prejudices by the use of cognitive psychology ideas in the politics course, such as motivated reasoning, confirmative bias, and other cognitive biases. The survey results on emotional and issue political polarisation from the course are presented in the article along with an interpretation of the results by the two student coauthors regarding the political polarisation of their generation. The course uses concepts from cognitive psychology, such as motivated thinking, confirmative bias, and other cognitive biases, to approach the introductory politics course. The post offers readings and ideas that political science instructors can utilise to replicate the course.

I. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- Gen Z voters' perspectives about politics and political parties in Tamil Nadu
- Gen Z voters' influential aspects of social media about today's politics
- Gen Z voters' ideology about future politics in Tamil Nadu

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study explores a **qualitative methodology**. The study designed in open-ended survey only, the questions are circulated through google forms and also direct in person to know the feed backs of the participants, the purpose of the research is to identify the political perception of the Gen Z voters in Tamil Nadu especially in the district of Chengalpattu. To support the research objectives and also the research design **Opinion Formation Theory** (examining how social interactions, media exposure, and personal experiences shape political views) was adopted. This design focuses on summarizing and presenting the characteristics of the variables without manipulation, offering a clear and structured overview of the research subject.

4.1 Population and Sample

This study employs a convenience sampling method utilizes non-probability sampling technique. For this research, participants were chosen based on their availability and readiness to contribute to the study. This approach facilitated timely data gathering while aligning with the study's practical requirements. Despite its limitations, convenience sampling was deemed appropriate given the research scope and constraints. This study finally received a participant group of 70 Gen Z voters from urban areas of Chengalpattu District in the age group of 18–25 years, and all of them are college students who have already voted, and the first-time voters are among the participants of this study.

4.2 Data collection

The Data are collected through Open-ended questionnaire circulated through google forms and direct in person, during data collection few questions were explored which is related to the research objectives.

- Which political party do you support, and why?
- What are your biggest concerns regarding Tamil Nadu's politics?
- Which social media platforms influence your political views the most?
- Do political influencers or memes affect your opinions? How?
- What changes do you want to see in Tamil Nadu's politics in the next 5 years?
- What qualities do you look for in a political leader?

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Gen Z's Perspectives on Politics & Political Parties in Tamil Nadu

The Gen Z voters hold distinct perspectives on politics, which were shaped by their socio-digital environment. Their views reflect a mix of optimism, *skepticism*, and demand for systemic change, in that cynicism towards traditional politics was the biggest issue in today's politics. Many mentioned that **"same parties, same promises, but no change."** This makes the Gen Z voters disillusioned with the long decade's dominance of the DMK and AIDMK, which shows that both are corrupt and they corrupt politics. The distrust happens on the politicians' side, and they impose their power on the public welfare only during the election times. **"They only remember us during elections."** Gen Z voters also demand the progressive change of governance to fulfil the public needs**. "We want leaders who talk about skills, not caste".** They clearly know that their leader should be for all equal rights, not for the caste. **"I want clean politics, but I'll vote for the 'lesser evil.'** Overall, the Gen Z voters need clean politics with development of the state and the nation, and meanwhile, they also have a belief that all politics and the politicians are evil in that they prefer the politicians who seem to be a lesser evil when compared to other politicians. **"TVK talks about change, but where's their blueprint?"** Gen Z voters are more likely to welcome the new political parties, but they are really fond of knowing their ideology, which gives the change in the current politics and also in the growth of future politics. Having the fame makes the face visible, but the politics make the face invisible and also portray the things in their way. **"Nowadays politics is an advertisement."** This clearly states that Gen Z voters are very aware of the politics and the advertisement of the politics, thus concludes Gen Z has an aspiring yet realistic political outlook; they reject traditional patronage politics while being cautiously optimistic about potential alternatives. Although their voice is amplified by social media, their influence is constrained by institutional restrictions.

5.2 Social Media's Role in Shaping Opinions

Social media is the primary political socialisation agent for urban Gen Z voters in Tamil Nadu, surpassing traditional media (TV, newspapers) and even family discussions. Its influence operates through multiple channels like Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp, Twitter/X, Share Chat, etc. The Gen Z voters highly use Instagram; around 40% of the participants use it, and they follow reels and meme pages. **"I follow NTK memes—they're funny but make me think,"** said many respondents, who said that they like to watch the visual storytelling of the political scenario through memes or reels on Instagram. Around 30% of the Gen Z voters use YouTube to enhance their political knowledge, and they also shared that they watch the political analysis videos like the "PARI SAL" and "DHRUV RATHEE" channel videos. Meanwhile, they like to see documentary-style political videos. WhatsApp was used by all the Gen Z voters, in which they share their political content channels and share their links to their contacts. 20% of the Gen Z voters use WhatsApp for the political content, especially since their relatives share that content on WhatsApp. **"My uncle's WhatsApp forwards are why my family hates BJP."** Many forwards from the relatives of Gen Z voters make them gain and lose interest in politics. Around 10% of the Gen Z voters use X/Twitter and participate in the hashtag campaigns to show their political interest through social media. They also feel that the algorithm of social media shapes their opinions in politics, and influencers on social media promote their parties, which are highly influential at the same time. Many fake videos give them misconceptions of the politics and provide fake literacy about the politics. Thus, the overall view of Gen Z voters is that social media is influential in shaping their opinions, which are that social media democratises political awareness

but also fragments truth. Gen Z's reliance on digital platforms makes them overloaded with information about politics and highly manipulated through social media.

5.3 Gen Z's Vision for Future Politics

Gen Z voters in Tamil Nadu envision an essential shift in the state's political landscape, moving beyond traditional Dravidian politics toward realistic, policy-driven governance. Their expectations reflect a blend of aspirational ideals and grounded demands, shaped by economic anxieties and digital exposure. They reject the status model of governance in which they still follow the Dravidian movement and anti-Dravidian movement by only the two parties, especially DMK & AIADMK. **"We respect Annadurai's ideals, but today's leaders just wear his mask."** They also feel that 70% of the Dravidian is essential in changing politics and the rational thinking of the people; they support the Dravidian ideals like "social justice, Tamil pride, reservation, etc." Gen Z voters also want an anti-corruption moment, which should be transparency among the public in the growth of development. **"We're learning 1990s syllabi in 2024!"** The Gen Z voters are more literal when compared to the other generations. They demand the education, which should have an updated curriculum every year, like they should be more skilled in the updated education that involves AI and climate science. **"Chennai floods won't stop if we keep building on wetlands."** Gen Z They possess sustainability in the urban development and take a step on water bodies to save water for the next generation. Equity among all the genders and also to support and develop a scheme for transgender and other LGBTQ+ rights and to make a safe and secure environment. **"Delhi shouldn't decide if Tamil kids learn about Thirukkural."** They are also clear in making the language pride global and not imposing ideas from the North or anywhere. Gen Z kids oppose the NEET examination and other allegations of taxation. **"New party, new ideology, new leader"** Gen Z voters are highly involved in politics through social media. Even though they need a new change in politics, many support TVK because of the new party that emerged and the fame that the leader has in Tamil Nadu, but still they have a dilemma about supporting the new emerging party based on the fame because politics is about ideology and the truth of a public voice. They have a hold and pragmatic opinions of the new politics and parties of Tamil Nadu. Thus, they conclude that social media creates an awareness of issues but fails to address the local issues that affect the public, like having a corruption-free government, high education, and economic policies for the next generation and making the cultural identity proud through language. Finally, they need a leader who listens first and reacts to that, not just giving lectures to the public.

VI. KEY FINDINGS

6.1 Gen Z's Perspectives on Politics & Political Parties in Tamil Nadu

- Disillusionment with traditional Dravidian parties
- Growing appeal of alternatives
- Declining influence of caste politics
- Pragmatic idealism

6.2 Social Media's Role in Shaping Opinions

- Instagram (40%) and YouTube (30%) dominate as primary political information sources.
- Memes and influencers shape perceptions more than traditional news.
- Misinformation is rampant
- Algorithmic echo chambers

6.3 Gen Z's Vision for Future Politics

- Gen Z demands on futuristic environment Jobs (75%), education reform (60%), and environmental sustainability (50%)
- Rejection of dynastic politics
- Desire for tech-savvy, transparent leader
- Strong support for Tamil identity

- Parties must address youth-centric issues (jobs, education) and leverage digital platforms to engage Gen Z.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study conclusively establishes that Gen Z voters in Tamil Nadu represent a decisive demographic shift in the state's political paradigm, characterized by their digital-native engagement patterns and substantive policy expectations. The research demonstrates their critical disillusionment with established Dravidian political structures, their sophisticated consumption of political information through new media ecosystems, and their firm rejection of traditional patronage politics in favour of meritocratic governance. These findings collectively indicate an impending political transformation in Tamil Nadu, where future electoral success will fundamentally depend on a party's ability to authentically address Gen Z's demands for employment-focused economic policies, education reform, environmental sustainability, and corruption-free administration through innovative digital engagement strategies. The study ultimately positions Gen Z not merely as passive voters but as active architects of Tamil Nadu's next political era, whose evolving political consciousness will inevitably reshape the state's governance framework in the coming decade

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