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# Political Knowledge and Its Effect on Voting Decisions: Generation Z Viewers of 'Dirty Vote' Documentary

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#### **Abstract**

**Introduction:** The 2024 Indonesian presidential election will see significant Generation Z participation, yet unverified political information may affect their understanding. The documentary 'Dirty Vote' has the potential to enhance political knowledge and influence voting decisions, particularly regarding election fraud--a key concern for Generation Z voters who are active digitally but vulnerable to misinformation. Using the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), this study examines how the documentary influences political knowledge, mediates voting decisions, and affects political engagement. The research evaluates whether 'Dirty Vote' can effectively enhance political understanding and shape voting choices among Generation Z.

**Methods:** This explanatory quantitative study targets viewers of the 'Dirty Vote' documentary on social media. A sample of 384 participants was determined using the Lemeshow formula and non-probability purposive sampling. Data were collected via Google Forms and analyzed using Generalized Structured Component Analysis (GSCA). The ELM theory guided the analysis.

**Findings:** The study found that 'Dirty Vote' significantly enhances political knowledge and influences voting decisions among Generation Z. Political knowledge acted as a mediator, strengthening the documentary's impact. The credibility of the documentary's source also played a key role in how the information was received. These findings suggest that documentaries can be an effective tool for political education, particularly for young voters.

**Originality:** This study provides new insights into the role of documentaries in political education for Generation Z in Semarang, using ELM theory and GSCA to explore media's impact on political knowledge and behavior.

**Keywords:** Documentary Films, Voting Decisions, Elaboration Likelihood Model, Media Influence on Elections, Generation Z Voters.

# Introduction

General elections are one of the main pillars of a democratic system, allowing citizens to actively participate in the political process. In general elections, there are several crucial aspects, including the decision to vote (Dassonneville et al., 2020). Voting decisions are influenced by various factors, including political knowledge, which refers to an individual's understanding of government structure and key policy issues (Halim & Salam, 2018). In the 2024 elections in Indonesia, Generation Z voters accounted for a significant portion, amounting to 22.85% of the total electorate (Yolency, 2024). This statistic highlights the growing influence and participation of young individuals in the electoral process, indicating the need to understand their voter decisions and political

engagement (Sahab, 2018). Previous research indicates that factors such as the capacity to vote and the adequacy of information about candidates play an important role in shaping Generation Z voters' choices (Sobari, 2019).

Generation Z, known as the digital generation, consumes a lot of online media to get information, including about politics (Evita, 2023). However, this rapid flow of information often brings negative impacts in the form of confusing information and hoaxes, which in turn can worsen the political situation, especially ahead of the 2024 General and Presidential Elections. In response to this situation, civil society organizations took the initiative to create educational content for the community, which aims to raise awareness of the potential for fraud in the electoral process (Saptohutomo & Meiliana, 2024). One of the concrete steps taken was to release video content in the form of the documentary film 'Dirty Vote' on the official YouTube channel of the Indonesian Center for Law and Policy Studies (PSHK). The movie received an overwhelming response with over 6.4 million views within two days.

'Dirty Vote,' directed by Dandhy Dwi Laksono, involves leading legal experts such as Zainal Arifin Mochtar, Bivitri Susanti, and Feri Amsari. The 1 hour and 57-minute movie thoroughly explores the various potentials for fraud in elections, from vote manipulation to abuse of power (Mulyana, 2024). Apart from YouTube, the movie trailer is also widely shared on other social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok, expanding its educational reach. With its informative and in-depth approach, 'Dirty Vote' serves not only as a spectacle but also as an important educational tool, helping people understand and anticipate the various forms of fraud that may occur in the 2024 election and presidential election process (Nathaniella & Triadi, 2024; Salampessy et al., 2024).

In the context of elections, mass media, including documentaries, play a crucial role in shaping public opinion and voting decisions. Documentaries not only provide information, but also serve as a tool to encourage political participation and shape public views (Agnone, 2007; Iyengar & Kinder, 2010). According to Karlin & Johnson (2011) and McGregor (2019), documentaries provide in-depth information on specific issues, helping audiences understand and engage more deeply. Mass media determine the issues that the public considers important (Agnone, 2007; Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; McCombs, 2004; Park, 2015), and accurate information is essential for voters to make rational decisions (Carpini & Keeter, 1997; Hayes & Guardino, 2011). In persuasive communication studies, documentaries are considered effective in changing attitudes and behaviors through strong arguments and evidence (Beniger & Herbst, 1990; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986).

The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), a key theoretical framework in persuasive communication, posits that individuals process persuasive information through two primary pathways: central and peripheral (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). The central pathway involves thoughtful, careful consideration of the content, leading to more enduring attitude change. In contrast, the peripheral pathway relies on superficial cues, which may result in more temporary attitude shifts. The documentary 'Dirty Vote,' for example, addresses the issue of electoral fraud through a compelling narrative and strong evidence, enhancing viewers' understanding of this complex issue. Understanding the pathways Generation Z audiences engage with when exposed to 'Dirty Vote' can provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of documentaries in fostering political knowledge and influencing voting decisions. Previous research has shown that the ELM can be applied in various contexts, such as advertising (Petty & Briñol, 2012) and social media marketing (Chang et al., 2015). Additionally, the model has been used to evaluate the

effectiveness of persuasive messages in areas such as smoking prevention (Flynn et al., 2011) and consumer engagement with brand microblogs (Bao & Wang, 2021).

Previous studies have applied the ELM to analyze broadcasts from the perspectives of argument quality, source credibility, and source attractiveness (Hapsari & Pamungkas, 2024; Lou & Kim, 2019; Permatasari, 2019; Rimadias et al., 2022; Utami, 2022). According to Permatasari (2019) and Weismueller et al. (2020), celebrity endorsers' attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise influence purchasing decisions, with trust being the most dominant factor, followed by expertise, and then attractiveness. Utami (2022) and Rimadias et al. (2022) found that factors such as attractiveness, credibility, ad creativity, and message appeal partially influence purchase intention, with credibility, creativity, and message appeal having significant effects, while attractiveness does not appear to influence purchase intention. However, Hapsari & Pamungkas (2024) and Lou & Kim (2019) indicate that the central route through the quality of the argument has a greater impact on attitude change than the peripheral route. Recent studies also suggest that influencer attractiveness and perceived similarity between influencers and their followers are positively related to followers' purchase intentions (Cheng et al., 2020; Lou & Kim, 2019). Furthermore, advertising disclosure and source credibility have been shown to affect consumer purchase intentions on social media (Han & Chen, 2022; Weismueller et al., 2020). Additionally, research indicates that characteristics of beauty influencers, such as trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, similarity, liking, familiarity, and match-up congruence, play a significant role in Instagram marketing (Rimadias et al., 2022).

Research has shown that documentaries are effective in changing attitudes towards various topics, such as mental illness, family planning, and social issues. For example, studies have shown positive changes in attitudes towards mental illness in response to documentaries (Anderson & Austin, 2012). Similarly, documentaries and dramas are proven to be effective in changing knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors towards family planning (Mubangizi et al., 2021, 2022). Media has a significant influence on voting decisions, especially among young voters. A study by Sayre et al. (2010) indicates that social media plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion and voter behavior during elections. Media, including television, radio, newspapers, and social media, provides important information to voters and influences their decisions (Mubangizi et al., 2021; Sayre et al., 2010). Furthermore, social media use has been shown to affect voter behavior through both online and offline political interactions (Stout et al., 2014). Therefore, the media plays a key role in shaping voter opinions and decisions in this digital era, where access to information is increasingly facilitated by various media platforms (Khan, 2017; Stout et al., 2014).

Based on research conducted by Dailey (2016), there is evidence to suggest that the media impacts political knowledge (Shino & Smith, 2022). This study highlights how the media, including print news and television news, can affect the level of political knowledge of the general public. However, this study also shows that there is a decrease in political knowledge and political participation from people who choose entertainment over news. This suggests that the influence of media on political knowledge may vary depending on individual media preferences.

Previous studies have found that political knowledge affects voting decisions (Mummolo & Peterson, 2017). Political knowledge has a significant role in influencing a person's voting decision. This finding suggests that a high level of political knowledge can increase spatial considerations--i.e. evaluation of current political issues--in the

voting decision-making process. More knowledgeable voters tend to be more sensitive and critical of emerging political issues, which in turn affects their voting preferences and decisions more substantially. Thus, political knowledge serves as a catalyst in deepening voters' understanding of the political context and relevant issues, which in turn impacts their political choices. Furthermore, research has shown that having political knowledge is empowering, as it allows voters to use heuristics to make informed choices, even if Election Day remains weeks away (Burnett & McCubbins, 2020). Voters who possess a solid comprehension of basic political knowledge are able to make informed choices when filling out an absentee mail ballot at home or when voting in person at an early voting location. Additionally, studies have found that the influence of social media on political knowledge and participation can vary across different contexts (Gardikiotis et al., 2020; Lu et al., 2023). While some research has suggested that the use of social media can negatively impact political knowledge and participation, this finding may not be applicable in the context of Chinese societies, where the potential exposure to crosscutting or low-quality political information may not induce ambivalent political views or negatively shape the formation of political knowledge (Lu et al., 2023). Furthermore, research has shown that social media can also be used to enhance political participation, especially among young voters (Dankwah & Mensah, 2021).

Zetra et al (2022) found that political knowledge acts as a mediating variable between political awareness and political participation. This study shows that political awareness has a positive and direct influence on political knowledge, while political knowledge has a positive and direct influence on political participation. The results of this study confirm that political awareness does not affect political participation directly, but rather through political knowledge as an intermediary factor. Therefore, increasing political knowledge is of key importance in efforts to increase political participation, as political knowledge deepens individuals' understanding and involvement in the political process, which ultimately increases their level of participation (Reichert, 2016).

This finding is supported by several other studies. Reichert (2016) suggests that political knowledge is far from being unimportant, though it has to translate into political efficacy to trigger political participation. Similarly, Park (2019) found that political information efficacy, which refers to the voter's confidence in his or her own political knowledge and its sufficiency to engage in the political process, can explain the impact of media use on political participation. Ondercin and Jones-White (2011) also found that political knowledge not only influences the likelihood of participating in politics but also influences an individual's attitudes and ability to participate effectively. These studies highlight the crucial role of political knowledge in mediating the relationship between political awareness and political participation. Increasing political knowledge can deepen individuals' understanding and involvement in the political process, ultimately leading to higher levels of political participation.

This study aims to explore the impact of the political documentary 'Dirty Vote' on political knowledge and voting decisions among Generation Z in Semarang City. Based on previous research, media plays a significant role in shaping political knowledge and voting behavior. The novelty of this study lies in the use of documentary films as the main variable that is expected to increase the audience's political knowledge and influence their voting decisions. With a special focus on Generation Z, which is a young and digitalnative age group, this study draws on the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) theory to test whether watching 'Dirty Vote' can serve as an effective political education tool, increase political knowledge, and influence voting decisions in elections.

This research proposes several hypotheses to be tested: (H1) there is a significant effect of the documentary 'Dirty Vote' on political knowledge among Generation Z audiences in Semarang City; (H2) there is a significant effect of the documentary 'Dirty Vote' on voting decisions among Generation Z audiences in Semarang City; (H3) there is a significant effect of political knowledge on voting decisions among Generation Z audiences in Semarang City; and (H4) political knowledge mediates between the documentary 'Dirty Vote' and voting decisions among Generation Z audiences in Semarang City.

#### **Methods**

This research employs a quantitative approach with an explanatory type, aiming to test and evaluate theories or hypotheses, thereby strengthening or potentially rejecting existing assumptions (Sari et al., 2022). The study population consists of viewers of the documentary 'Dirty Vote,' though the precise number remains undetermined. The sample size, calculated using the Lemeshow formula, was determined to be 384. Following (Cooper & Emory, 1996) guidelines, when the population size is unknown, sample size is derived from relevant statistical methods. The sampling technique applied in this research is non-probability purposive sampling, wherein individuals who did not meet the established criteria were excluded (Kriyantono, 2020). These criteria included being Indonesian citizens, having viewed the 'Dirty Vote' documentary, and falling within the Generation Z age range in Semarang City.

Data collection was conducted using a 25-question online questionnaire via Google Forms, designed to assess three key constructs: the documentary film 'Dirty Vote' (X), political knowledge (Z), and voting decision (Y). The indicators for the documentary were based on message quality, source credibility, and attractiveness, derived from the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Political knowledge was measured by understanding electoral law, the purpose of elections, campaign issues, and awareness of political news (Zetra et al., 2022). Voting decision indicators included attention, interest, intention to vote, and candidate selection (Alwie et al., 2022). The respondents' agreement was assessed on a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 6, providing data on how the documentary influenced political knowledge and voting decisions. Data analysis utilized GeSCA Pro, a software based on Variance-Based Structural Equation Modeling (VB-SEM), using the Generalized Structured Component Analysis (GSCA) method. Prior to evaluating the structural model and conducting hypothesis testing, two preliminary conditions must be met.

#### **Results**

Respondent Description

Table 1 presents the demographic data of Generation Z respondents who participated in this study. The data were obtained through the distribution of an online questionnaire using Google Forms, enabling efficient data collection and reaching respondents from diverse backgrounds in Semarang City.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Generation Z in Semarang City

Demographic	Description	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	60.7%
	Male	39.3%
<b>Education Level</b>	High School or Equivalent	71.7%
	D3, D4, S1, S2	28.3%

Occupation	Students	58.3%
	Private Employees	19.8%
	Civil Servants	12.1%
	Other	9.8%

Note: The total percentage equals 100%; 'High school or equivalent' includes graduates of SMA/SMK/MA (Senior High School/Vocational High School/Islamic High School); 'D3, D4, S1, S2' refers to diploma, undergraduate, and postgraduate education levels.

Data was collected from a survey of Generation Z respondents in Semarang City with n=384.

Generation Z in Semarang City, with an age range of 17-27 years old, showed significant interest in the movie 'Dirty Vote.' Of the total respondents, 60.7% were female and 39.3% were male. Of the total respondents, 60.7% were female and 39.3% were male. 71.7% of respondents have a high school education or equivalent, while the rest are D3, D4, S1, and S2 graduates. Generation Z in Semarang City, with an age range of 17-27 years old, showed significant interest in the movie 'Dirty Vote.' Of the total respondents, 60.7% were female and 39.3% were male. Of the total respondents, 60.7% were female and 39.3% were male. 71.7% of respondents have a high school education or equivalent, while the rest are D3, D4, S1, and S2 graduates. Based on the type of work, 58.3% are students, 19.8% are private employees, 12.1% are civil servants, and the rest are selfemployed, have other types of jobs, or are not working. This high level of electoral participation among Generation Z indicates a strong political awareness, possibly influenced by access to information through social media and movies that contain political messages. This finding illustrates that Generation Z in Semarang is not only active in consuming digital content, but also shows real involvement in the democratic process.

## Measurement Model

In table 2, all loading factor values exceed the value  $\geq 0.708$  so that all indicators in this study can represent their latent constructs well. Furthermore, the PVE (Proportion of Variance Explained) value exceeds the minimum limit of  $\geq 0.50$ . So based on the evaluation of the loading factor and PVE value, the measurement model has good convergent validity.

Table 2. Loading Factor, PVE, Alpha, Rho

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Indicator	Estimate	SE	95% CI (L)	95% CI (U)	PVE	Alpha	Rho
AQ					0.83	0.931	0.951
X1	0.921	0.009	0.901	0.938			
X2	0.928	0.008	0.91	0.945			
X3	0.857	0.016	0.825	0.887			
X4	0.936	0.007	0.924	0.954			
SC					0.764	0.897	0.928
X5.1	0.871	0.017	0.832	0.893			
X5.2	0.902	0.013	0.873	0.92			
X5.3	0.883	0.017	0.844	0.911			
X6	0.838	0.019	0.802	0.871			
SA					0.794	0.913	0.939
X7.1	0.926	0.009	0.907	0.941			
X7.2	0.929	0.008	0.915	0.942			
X8	0.844	0.021	0.801	0.886			

X9	0.863	0.017	0.828	0.897			
Z	0.005	0.017	0.020	0.057	0.73	0.925	0.942
<b>Z</b> 1	0.85	0.016	0.818	0.882			
$\mathbb{Z}2$	0.878	0.017	0.843	0.906			
Z3.1	0.903	0.011	0.881	0.92			
Z3.2	0.9	0.009	0.882	0.921			
	0.826	0.027	0.761	0.867			
	0.762	0.029	0.707	0.818			
Y					0.651	0.911	0.929
Y1.1	0.854	0.018	0.817	0.885			
Y1.2	0.846	0.02	0.805	0.884			
Y2	0.765	0.027	0.709	0.806			
Y3.1	0.78	0.024	0.717	0.827			
Y.3.2	0.815	0.024	0.753	0.856			
Y4.1	0.812	0.021	0.765	0.846			
Y4.2	0.77	0.029	0.699	0.809			

Note: SE=Standard Error; PVE=Proportion of Variance Explained; 95% CI (L)=lower bound of 95% Confidence Interval (CI); 95% CI (U)=upper bound of 95% Confidence Interval (CI); AQ=Argument Quality; SC=Source Credibility; SA=Source Attractiveness; Z=Political Knowledge; Y=Voting Decision.

HTMT is the ratio of the average correlation between indicators of different constructs (heterotrait) to the average correlation between indicators of the same construct (monotrait). It provides a measure of how much relatedness there is between supposedly different constructs. The HTMT value is used to test discriminant validity, i.e. whether the different constructs in the structural model are really different from each other. The maximum acceptable limit is 0.90. If the resulting value is higher than that, then there is a problem with discriminant validity (Hwang et al., 2023). In table 3, the HTMT results between constructs do not exceed 0.90, which indicates that the model has good discriminant validity.

Data reliability can be evaluated through Cronbach's Alpha and Rho (composite reliability) values. Data is considered reliable if the Alpha and Rho values are  $\geq 0.60$  (Ghozali, 2016). The results in table 3 show that the Alpha and Rho values are more than 0.6, which means that the data can be considered reliable.

Table 3. HTMT Ratio

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	Value	SE	95%CI L	95%CI U
AQ⇔SC	0.841	0.0	0.0	0.0
$AQ \leftrightarrow SA$	0.775	0.0	0.0	0.0
$AQ \leftrightarrow Z$	0.675	0.0	0.0	0.0
$AQ \leftrightarrow Y$	0.668	0.0	0.0	0.0
SC↔SA	0.861	0.0	0.0	0.0
SC↔Z	0.737	0.0	0.0	0.0
$SC \leftrightarrow Y$	0.748	0.0	0.0	0.0
SA↔Z	0.542	0.0	0.0	0.0
$SA \leftrightarrow Y$	0.599	0.0	0.0	0.0
Z↔Y	0.799	0.0	0.0	0.0

Note: HTMT=Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio; SE=Standard Error; 95% CI (L)=lower bound of 95% Confidence Interval (CI); 95% CI (U)=upper bound of 95% Confidence

Interval (CI); AQ=Argument Quality; SC=Source Credibility; SA=Source Attractiveness; Z=Political Knowledge; Y=Voting Decision. Goodness of Fit Evaluation

In the estimation and model fit results using the GSCA Pro application, it was found that the FIT value was 0.713, AFIT was 0.711, GFI was 0.986, and SRMR was 0.066. Since these values meet the set limits, the model can be considered good and feasible to use to explain the phenomenon being studied in hypothesis testing.

Table 4. Structural Model FIT Measure								
FIT	AFIT	FITs	FITm	GFI	SRMR	OPE	<b>OPEs</b>	OPEm
0.713	0.711	0.6	0.739	0.986	0.066	0.289	0.403	0.262

Note: FIT=Goodness-of-Fit; AFIT=Adjusted Fit; FITs=Sample Fit; FITm=Model Fit; GFI=Goodness of Fit Index; SRMR=Standardized Root Mean Square Residual; OPE=Observed Predictive Error; OPEs=Sample Predictive Error; OPEm=Model Predictive Error.

Structural Model Evaluation & Hypothesis Testing

Table 5 shows the R squared results of each endogenous variable. The three dimensions in this study, namely Argument Quality (AQ), Source Credibility (SC), and Source Attractiveness (SA) have values of 0.833, 0.895, and 0.787 respectively. So the Argument Quality dimension is 83.3% explained by the indicators (X1 to X4) and 16.7% explained by other indicators. The Source Credibility dimension 89.5% is explained by indicators X5 and X6, while the remaining 10.5% is explained by other indicators. The Source Attractiveness dimension is 78.7% explained by the indicators (X7 to X9) and 21.3% explained by other indicators. The Political Knowledge variable (Z) has a value of 0.457, which means that 45.7% is explained by the 'Dirty Vote' movie variable (X), while the rest is explained by other variables not studied. And finally, the Voting Decision variable (Y) has a value of 0.631, which means that the variable is 63.1% explained by the 'Dirty Vote' movie variable and Political Knowledge, while the other 36.9% is explained by other variables not examined in this study.

Tabel 5. R Squared						
AQ SC SA Z Y						
0.833	0.895	0.787	0.457	0.631		

Note: R Squared (R<sup>2</sup>)=shows the proportion of variance explained by the model; AQ=Argument Quality; SC=Source Credibility; SA=Source Attractiveness; Z=Political Knowledge; Y=Voting Decision.

## Direct Effect

Figure 1 shows the relationship between the documentary 'Dirty Vote' (X) and Political Knowledge (Z) indicated by a path coefficient of 0.676 with a 95% confidence interval between 0.604 and 0.746, and an F-squared value of 0.843 indicating a large effect of X on Z, which indicates that the first hypothesis is accepted. In testing the second hypothesis, the path coefficient of Film 'Dirty Vote' (X) on Voting Decision (Y) shows 0.332 with a 95% confidence interval between 0.245 and 0.44 and F squared 0.124, meaning that the second hypothesis is accepted and Film 'Dirty Vote' has a positive and significant influence on Voting Decision although with a small effect. The path coefficient between variables Z and Y is 0.531 with a significant p value, indicated by the 95% confidence interval between 0.432 and 0.612 which does not cross zero, and the F-squared value of 0.393 indicates a moderate effect of Z on Y. So the third hypothesis is accepted, indicating that Political Knowledge has a positive and significant influence on Voting Decision with a moderate effect.

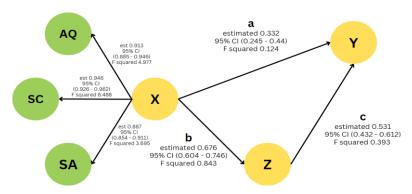


Figure 1. Testing Direct Effect (AQ=Argument Quality; SC=Source Credibility; SA=Source Attractiveness; Z=Political Knowledge; Y=Voting Decision; est/estimated=estimated loading factor; F Squared (f²)=measures the impact of an independent variable on the dependent variable's variance) (source: Data processing Result)

#### Indirect Effect

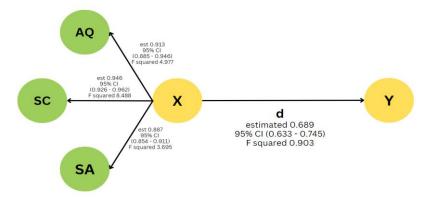


Figure 2. Testing Indirect Effect (AQ=Argument Quality; SC=Source Credibility; SA=Source Attractiveness; Y=Voting Decision; est/estimated=estimated loading factor; F Squared (f²)=measures the impact of an independent variable on the dependent variable's variance) (source: Data processing Result)

Based on the results listed in Figures 1 and 2, the values of a, b, c, and d are shown which indicate the magnitude of the path coefficient and its significance in each path. When all the results in the two models are significant, it is necessary to compare the values of a and d to determine whether variable Z acts as a mediating variable or not. The applicable provisions are that if the value of a is smaller than d, then variable Z acts as a partial mediating variable. However, if the value of a is close to the value of d, then variable Z is said not to be a mediating variable (Ngatno, 2019).

#### **Discussion**

This research aims to examine the influence of the documentary film 'Dirty Vote' on the enhancement of political knowledge and voting decisions among Generation Z in Semarang City, as well as to explain the mediating role of political knowledge in this relationship. As its theoretical foundation, this study applies the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), which identifies two primary routes in information processing: the central route and the peripheral route (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). The central route involves deep thinking and critical evaluation of arguments, where individuals carefully consider the

information presented, particularly when they find the message personally relevant or are motivated to process it thoroughly (Kang et al., 2015). In contrast, the peripheral route relies on superficial cues, such as the attractiveness or credibility of the source, where individuals may not engage in extensive cognitive processing(Alsharo et al., 2024). The selection of this theory is relevant as it facilitates an in-depth analysis of how information in the film is received and processed by the audience.

The results of the data analysis show that source credibility is the best reflection of the documentary 'Dirty Vote'. Generation Z audiences rated the information conveyed in the movie as trustworthy and reliable, which increased the effectiveness of the movie in increasing political knowledge and influencing voting decisions. This finding is in line with ELM theory which states that when individuals are unmotivated or unable to process information deeply, they tend to rely on peripheral cues such as source credibility (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Source credibility in this study includes the audience's perception of the reliability, expertise and goodwill of the filmmaker. This shows the importance of perceived credibility in influencing audience attitudes and behaviors.

Regarding the first hypothesis, this study found that the documentary film 'Dirty Vote' has a positive and significant influence on increasing political knowledge among Generation Z viewers in Semarang City. This finding confirms that documentary films as media containing political information can function as effective political education tools. Similar to the study by Adi et al. (2021), which mentioned that documentary films can influence the level of knowledge, this finding aligns with Dailey's (2016) research, which shows that print and television media have a significant impact on voting decisions. Additionally, using a different medium, namely digital media, the results still show the influence of media on increasing the political knowledge of its audience.

Regarding the second hypothesis, this study found that the documentary film 'Dirty Vote' has a positive and significant influence on voting decisions among Generation Z in Semarang City. This result is in line with Intyaswati et al. (Intyaswati et al., 2021), which shows that media has a significant impact on voting decisions, especially among young voters. In this context, the use of social media has been proven to influence voter behavior through political interaction. Previous research also shows that documentary films are effective in changing attitudes on various topics (Anderson & Austin, 2012; Mubangizi et al., 2021, 2022). These findings confirm that media, including documentary films, plays a key role in shaping voter opinions and decisions in the digital era, where access to information is increasingly easy through various media platforms. Thus, the documentary film 'Dirty Vote' can be considered an effective tool in political education and the formation of voting decisions among Generation Z.

For the third hypothesis, this study revealed that political knowledge positively and significantly affects voting decisions among Generation Z in Semarang City. Young voters who possess greater political knowledge are inclined to make more informed and critical voting choices. This finding aligns with Heroux's (2023) research, which indicates that voters with higher political awareness are generally more attuned and critical towards evolving political issues, thereby impacting their preferences and voting behavior. The discussion of the fourth hypothesis in this journal, which states that political knowledge mediates the influence of the documentary film 'Dirty Vote' on voting decisions among Generation Z viewers in Semarang City, shows partial mediation results. This finding is consistent with previous research by Zetra et al. (2022), which found that political knowledge acts as a mediating variable between political awareness and political participation. In this context, the documentary film 'Dirty Vote' successfully increased

viewers' political knowledge, which in turn influenced their voting decisions.

Although the direct influence of the film on voting decisions is not entirely mediated by political knowledge, the increase in political knowledge still significantly contributes to strengthening the effect of the documentary film on voting behavior among Generation Z. Overall, this study highlights the importance of documentary films as an effective tool for political education among Generation Z. These findings open opportunities for further utilization of documentary media to enhance political knowledge and voter participation, particularly among first-time voters and Generation Z. Therefore, all stakeholders involved in ensuring free, fair, and transparent elections should consider incorporating documentary media into their political education strategies to encourage more critical and active engagement from young voters.

In this context, the findings of this study hold significant implications for political education, especially for the younger generation. Documentary films, such as 'Dirty Vote,' can serve as an effective medium to increase political literacy and promote more critical political participation. In Indonesia, where youth political engagement is often hindered by limited access to credible information, documentary films can bridge this gap by providing data-driven and relevant content tailored to their audience. However, the success of political education through documentary media heavily depends on several factors, such as the quality of content, credibility of sources, and presentation of information. Thus, media producers and policymakers must collaborate to ensure that documentaries not only captivate audiences but also deliver accurate and contextually relevant information to address the issues faced by Generation Z.

Nonetheless, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. *First*, it focuses solely on Generation Z in Semarang City, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other age groups or regions. Generation Z in other areas with different social, cultural, and political characteristics may respond differently to documentaries like 'Dirty Vote.' *Second*, this study employs a quantitative design using a survey approach, which is limited to measuring perceptions and self-reported data. This approach may introduce respondent bias, such as overreporting the effects of the documentary on their knowledge or voting decisions. Future studies could consider employing qualitative or experimental methods to gain deeper insights into the mechanisms through which documentary films influence political behavior.

Third, this study does not explore external factors such as political discussions on social media or the influence of family and peers, which may also affect political knowledge and voting decisions. Subsequent research that integrates these variables could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of documentary films. Fourth, the temporal limitation of this study conducted in the lead-up to the 2024 general elections may have influenced the results, as audiences might have been more politically sensitive during this period. Future studies conducted in different temporal contexts could help determine whether the observed effects are temporary or more enduring.

## Conclusion

The study concludes that documentary films, such as 'Dirty Vote,' are significant tools for political education, particularly for Generation Z, as they enhance political knowledge and influence voting decisions. This highlights the potential of utilizing media to promote critical political engagement among young voters, which is crucial for fostering a clean, fair, and transparent electoral process. Future research should examine the applicability of documentary films as educational tools across various age groups and

regions to enhance the generalizability of these findings. Moreover, subsequent studies should adopt qualitative or experimental approaches to uncover the mechanisms through which documentary films shape political behavior, while also exploring external influences such as social media discussions, family dynamics, and peer interactions. By addressing these factors, future research can provide a more comprehensive understanding of how to optimize media use for political education across diverse sociocultural and temporal contexts.

# **Conflict of Interest**

We certify that there is no conflict of interest with any financial, personal, or other relationships with other people or organizations related to the material discussed in the manuscript.

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