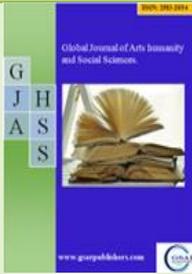


	Global Journal of Arts Humanity and Social Sciences			
	ISSN: 2583-2034			
	Abbreviated key title: Glob.J.Arts.Humanit.Soc.Sci			
	Frequency: Monthly			
	Published By GSAR Publishers			
Journal Homepage Link: https://gsarpublishers.com/journal-gjahss-home/				
Volume - 6	Issue - 2	February 2026	Total pages 142-148	DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.18668089

Gen Z and the Future of South Asian Democracy

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Article History

Received: 05- 02- 2026

Accepted: 14- 02- 2026

Published: 16- 02- 2026

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Abstract

Generation Z (1995-2012) is emerging as a political disruptor in South Asia, challenging traditional governance through digital literacy. This paper examines these “youthquakes” that are reshaping democracy in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh and offers key insights into the transition from digital talk to offline civic action. Using a qualitative mixed-methods design, it draws on data from regional surveys, focus groups, and semi-structured interviews to explore the youth’s connection to the theory of generational cohorts. The paper reveals that South Asian Gen Zers favour climate action, economic transparency, and social justice over legacy party politics, and they convert digital mobilisation into persistent physical protest. However, Gen Z, faced with a range of issues, including state censorship and scarce resources, continues to speak truth to regional power. Their mobilisation points the way to a more responsible and digitally connected political ecology, one that demands a conjoining of grassroots activism with formal policy reform. As this rising generation takes power, they will insist on political honesty and redefine South Asian citizenship.

Keywords: Civic engagement, digital mobilisation, Generation Z, south asian politics, youthquake

1. Introduction

The term refers to the first generation growing up with big technology and social media, born between the mid-1990s and 2012. In South Asia, they have become political actors who use digital platforms to challenge social norms and demand more accountable governance. Gen Z is innovative. Gen Z has a strong social conscience and expresses a keen interest in diversity. Members of Gen Z turn to online tools to confront looming local and global challenges that constitute the youthquake redefining electoral landscapes (Sato, 2024, pp. 1-4). They focus on environmental issues, unemployment, and corruption, rather than the routine politics of one party versus another (Lim, 2024). Unlike the last generation that stayed online, Gen Z can take their digital conversations offline through tangible, on-the-ground protests. It is reconfiguring forms of civic participation in countries such as India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh (Martelli & Ari, 2018, pp. 263–300). This generation is poised to shape the future of South Asian politics.

1.1. Background of the Paper

Generation Z (born 1990s–2012) are the first global digital natives, and they have been politicised through millennial activism in the wake of the 2008-09 financial crisis (Hamadeh, 2022). This green clique is environmentally aware, prioritises sustainability, and uses social media to challenge societal norms. In South Asia, digital activism among Gen Z is influencing electoral politics and policy-making. While the South Asian Games were conceived as a vehicle for grassroots democracy, Gen Z insists on transparency and inclusion in governance, to the extent that this may create a possible “youthquake” (Sato, 2024, pp. 1-4). Facing constraints such as censorship and limited resources, digital access has enabled them to hold governments to account (Memon et al., 2018, pp. 121–136). Knowing their attributes is key to negotiating the area’s rapidly changing political landscape.

1.2. Significance of the Paper

This paper analyses the impact of Generation Z on the politics of South Asia in the era of digital mobilisation and local activism. It chronicles the shift from online conversations to offline mobilisations, reflecting the influence of this new generation of digital natives. Gen Z’s proclamations of allegiance to



transparency and social justice disrupt older power dynamics, forcing mainstream political parties to come to terms with youth priorities such as climate action and economic reform. The findings also indicate that youth movements are stubborn against censorship and polarisation (Jalli, 2025; pp. 1-11). Our study offers a contrast with an unprecedented significant force, the youthquake transforming democracy engagement across the subcontinent from Islamabad to Kathmandu, thus it provides a much-needed new perspective both for the academic and policy communities.

1.3. Methodology

The paper is multi-method and seeks to explore the political inclinations, activities, and experiences of the South Asian Generation Z. Primary data were collected in late 2022 through regional surveys, focus groups, and semi-structured interviews. We developed these qualitative and quantitative tools to map the complexity of youth engagement in national and provincial contexts.

The analysis practices triangulation of sources to identify and verify regional patterns in digital mobilisation, online discourse, and offline protest action. It is configured as a longitudinal contrast between the political socialisation of Gen Z and precedents among previous generations of South Asians. Furthermore, secondary data from Ipsos pre-COVID-19 surveys and the 2022 World Economic Forum Global Shapers Survey have been utilised in the analysis. Such a broad framework enables us to examine how online behaviour is translated into sustained offline political participation and concrete policy impact within the region's evolving governance landscape.

1.4. Theoretical Concept

Generational cohort theory underpins this study, defining Generation Z (born in the mid-1990s–2012) as a distinct demographic whose formative values are shaped by the “digital native” experience. This concept suggests that similar socioeconomic and cultural conditions produce a characteristic ‘youthquake’ potential, in which earlier adoption and use of digital technologies contribute to an increased sense of the political and social self.

The analysis is the idea of ‘dual politics’ that argues that contemporary social movements in South Asia mobilise at two levels (political and economic inequalities) while building collective identities based on religion, caste or regional ethnicity. It also uses the concept of “intergenerational closure” (strong ties and shared norms between generations) to account for how Gen Z acquires the social capital required for ongoing cooperation. This paper combines theories of digital mobilisation with a context-specific account of student radicalism to explore the role “political lambda” plays in translating online activism into substantive offline political engagement and democratic participation in mainland South Asia.

2. Findings and Discussions

Generation Z (Gen Z) is the first generation to be considered global digital natives, born from the mid-1990s to 2010, and digitally

developed skills, using technologies such as online social networking. Gen Z advocates diversity, inclusion, and sustainability; they are politically engaged and demonstrate prosocial attitudes and respect for authority, particularly in voting behaviour and social media use, across South Asian countries.

2.1. Understanding Gen Z

Gen Z is the generation born between 1995 and 2012, whose political coming-of-age has followed in the wake of Generation Y's (or millennials') wave in 2008-09. Digital natives who grew up with social media, Gen Z, are politically aware and empowered at a younger age. They are bold enough to question existing social norms, condemn lifestyles visible only from their armchairs, and often engage in online activities. This has made them self-expressive, independent and liberal. This nature also highlights its political advantage (Hamadeh, 2022).

The new generation has its own shared culture that distinguishes it from previous generations. This group comprises adults in the 2010s, with some overlap at either end with millennials and post-millennials. While the general features appear largely consistent across Gen Z, numerous other regional and situational elements differ substantially. This generation may be a game-changer in South Asian politics, affecting elections, political economy, policy preference dynamics, and citizen activism across the region. Political parties have organised campaigns and outreach to respond to youth demands regarding education, employment, and governance.

On issues related to the younger generation, lawmakers have paid greater attention to campus outreach, youth councils, and open governance. Coming of age in a time of rapid change and global connectivity, Gen Z has experienced satellite TV, the internet, social media, political turmoil, and environmental crisis during their formative years. As a result, they become sensitive to social issues, are willing to participate in solving social problems, and even have a strong sense of hope. Many join social and political movements, such as protests against climate change and calls for democracy. Social media is a critical channel for broadcasting movements & Gen Z ethos, highlighting that they are currently represented beyond traditional age-based demographic surveys (Marah et al., 2024, pp. 238-249).

2.2. Characteristics of Gen Z

A generation is a group of people who were born around the same time and share similar ideas, values, and experiences. Generational categorisation can also serve marketing purposes and offer insights into zeitgeist tones that frame cultural and intellectual trends of the time. In South Asian politics, Gen Z demonstrates a predilection for digital mobilisation, activism, and the questioning of governance accounting. This is the first generation to come of age with widespread internet access and technology at their fingertips; hence, they have been regarded as “digital natives” rather than as having digital literacy. Gen Z is influenced by significant historical events and cultural shifts, which often result in a greater sense of responsibility to address global issues (Sato, 2024, pp. 1-4).

The word “youthquake” does not adequately capture the potential they represent as agents for good in the world. The online virtual space has been their educator, and they can express themselves using the same technology that educates them. In pyramidal corporations, this voice begins to count, an influence that makes things that seem distant to you seem near. The faa legionária website is not narrow-minded, and its essential message reaches a broad audience. Gen Z is a “social generation,” and it forms permanent intergenerational closure, strong bonds between generations that are based on shared norms and values. This creates social capital that has ongoing utility for collaboration, while also demonstrating the exceptionalism and power of this generation (Hamadeh, 2022).

2.3. Digital Natives and Activism

Generation Z (Gen Z), born between 1995 and the early 2010s, is the most recently developed global generation to come of age. Described as digital-native activists, Gen Z are digitally active in addressing social justice movements and in political action that challenges traditional forms of political participation (Udupa et al., 2019, pp. 343–359). The young have always been harbingers of social and political change, and South Asia is no exception. Youth & Politics: This study examines the political attitudes, activities, and experiences of young people in South Asia. It is based on regional surveys, as well as focus groups and semi-structured interviews conducted at the end of 2022. Research data are triangulated to compare regional patterns of youth activism, including digital mobilisation, online expressions, and offline protests, at the national and subnational levels.

South Asian Gen Zers are more worried about climate change, unemployment, and corruption than their older counterparts. The research examines the necessity of breeding from an active (political) lambda to foster democratic attitudes and political comprehension, and finds that young adults are less involved than anticipated in democratic hallmarks. It has also been found that the development of democratic attitudes depends on the active construction of a political lambda, and that young individuals are less committed to democratic values and institutions than expected. Extending beyond digital-native strategies, the findings suggest that online mobilisation and organising can lead to offline political engagement when social media facilitates non-diminishing interaction, credible leadership, and political outcomes (Lim, 2024).

3. Historical Context of South Asian Politics

These movements have shaped today’s global political climate. In South Asia, social movement theory and the earlier political practice bubble up from the context. Bangladesh and Nepal highlight the major political overhauls of the early 1990s, including movements toward constitutional monarchies and multiparty democracy. As a result, the political situation in both countries was relatively calm compared with neighbouring India, where chaos continued to reign. The continuing ethnic strife between Modi’s Hindu-centric government and Muslim societies underscores

Pakistan’s significant power in the region (Funahashi & Ishizaka, 2013, pp. 3–8).

3.1. Political Landscape Pre-Gen Z

Political activism among student radical groups in India, however, is not always left-leaning; it is often conservative. The OBC quotas were associated with the violent riots in the late 1980s and again in 2006-07 following the Mandal Commission. In an ethno-cultural confrontation in Assam (1979-85), the All Assam Students’ Union (AASU) pursued a policy of detecting and deporting Bangladeshi immigrants and seeking greater autonomy. Hindu students played key roles in pogroms against Muslims and anti-Dalit violence in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. In Meerut, middle-caste political activists critique the local state while avoiding integration (Martelli & Ari, 2018, pp. 263–300).

3.2. Major Political Movements in South Asia

Social movements in South Asia exhibit diverse styles and objectives, often grassroots in character, that contest established authority and demand change (Funahashi & Ishizaka, 2013, pp. 3–8). Examples include India’s 2011 anti-corruption campaign led by Anna Hazare and widespread 2012 protests against sexual violence; such movements contribute to democracy yet often receive limited attention.

South Asian social movements attracted scholarly attention only after scholarly efforts, traditionally focused on post-1947 movements, were not conceptually refined until the 1980s. Recent work has developed new approaches, such as the ‘dual politics’ theory in which movements are seen as focused on struggles over class (political, social and economic inequalities) even as they construct collective identifications with caste, religion or region. The interrelated issues of equality and identity not only prompt mobilisation but also create spaces for reflection on the social meanings that have hitherto been taken for granted.

4. Gen Z’s Political Engagement

In South Asia, Gen Z shapes political landscapes from Islamabad to Kathmandu and New Delhi, not infrequently leading governments. Their digital competencies facilitate these forays, giving them access to the information they need to make demands and choices in electoral relations. The trend suggests a significant shift among political parties, with a greater emphasis on issues such as climate action and anti-corruption that are of interest to young people. Student groups representing Gen Z drive the agenda on policy issues across the region via social media (Kumi et al., 2025).

There is a revolutionary change in the levels of rapid registration, youth turnout, candidate-centred support, and regional discrepancies. In contrast to past uprisings, Gen Z rises in the ranks by questioning institutional authority and taking leadership roles with a low level of baseline participation. They energise democracy by increasing turnout, attracting young people into debates, and demanding accountability from elected officials. In South Asian politics, this force results in heightened advocacy and a fresh framing of issues, and generally aligns with civil society demands for greater inclusion, governance transparency, and social

welfare and inclusive reforms to mitigate youth joblessness, access to educational facilities, and social mobility (Omweri, 2024, pp. 1-22).

From voting onward, digital platforms tip the scales. Youngsters organise multicountry-to-regional responses, acting in unison from Burma to India. They use their leverage with governments to address human rights abuses and environmental disasters. They mobilise Rastafarians from Kathmandu to Karachi, and they campaign to expand the voting age across the subcontinent. They run Rastas from Kathmandu to Karachi; they petition to lower the voting age across the subcontinent. On campus and in the classroom, Gen Z activists are leveraging social media to build support, frame issues inclusively, and hold local leaders accountable.

4.1. Voting Trends Among Gen Z

'Gen Z,' or individuals born after 1996, are now among the youngest demographic groups of eligible voters, comprising about a quarter of the population in South Asia. Their forthcoming political participation is expected to reshape regional politics significantly. The political engagement of this generation is unique on several dimensions: hybrid media habits that consist of traditional news sources and digital platforms; (usually) high levels of ideological polarisation; and widespread concern about issues such as climate change. The combination of resocialization channels, committed activism, and organisation enables Gen Z to potentially not just challenge but, in some instances, reshape the landscape of South Asian politics (Orsini et al., 2025, pp. 299-334)

South Asia's youth involvement in elections has fluctuated wildly across time and space. At times, newer generations have been strongly associated with parallel patterns of political engagement; at other times, they have been characterised as relatively marginal, producing divergent forms of electoral incorporation. At the same time, youth involvement has witnessed a marked revival across the region in recent years. The details of this resuscitated engagement vary significantly from place to place. For example, in Bangladesh, the long-term processes of youth mobilisation have been crystallised into more institutionally stable forms - however contested - such as the Awami League's massive win in 2018 and the role played by youth in it.

India has experienced a surge in youth involvement that aligns with broader waves of conservative realignment. In Pakistan, the July 25, 2018, elections attracted unprecedented numbers of young voters to polling stations after 20 years of intergenerational disengagement. Similarly, Nepal's 2017 General Election saw youth participation at its highest in more than a decade, paralleling the reemergence of charismatic youth leaders and the mobilisation of youth wings in national politics (Martelli & Ari, 2018, pp. 263-300).

4.2. Social Media Influence on Political Awareness

Political awareness is a key prerequisite for political participation, at a minimum, because people require information about politics to develop the capacity to engage in it successfully. In South Asia, social media is the primary source of political information. South

Asian youth have become frontrunners in using digital platforms to mobilise fragmented activists aligned with prevalent causes on the region's streets. Social media platforms facilitate an unprecedented speed and intensity of collective action compared to previous social movements, but these social democracies rest on a hypocritical agenda.

Social media is the new battleground for engagement and power. The digital revolution in social media has facilitated a new form of 'activism' in South Asia, enabling users to engage with issues. It causes that resonate with them without necessarily requiring financial resources, time, or even leaving their homes. They can share a post, donate money, plan or attend a meeting, or sign a petition in support. In this way, we observe an emphasis on political activism on social media among South Asian youth, with a preference for digital causes and mobilisation.

4.3. Grassroots Movements and Protests

Grassroots protests and demonstrations constitute the core of social movements, in which collective action and contentious politics play central roles. Large-scale grassroots protests marked the 2010s, with the Jan Lokpal movement in India and the Pashtun Tahaffuz Movement (PTM) in Pakistan serving as case studies. These occurred after a first wave of protests that spread online, and came during an extreme moment when Gen Z reached adulthood - with the image of general alienation still established: digital social-networking platforms may reinforce, rather than decrease 'separateness' (Martelli & Ari, 2018, pp. 263-300).

Grassroots mobilisations and insurgent protests have been transformative agents of change in South Asian politics, bringing together disparate factions, including student groups, local communities, and digital networks, to contest established patterns of power distribution and demand increasingly inclusive governance. is transforming how young activists organise, mobilise, and hold elected officials accountable, often tapping on-campus networks, local NGOs, and social media campaigns to sustain momentum beyond episodic protests. newly involves young activists in organising, mobilising, and making demands on elected officials, often by mobilising their on-campus networks, local NGOs, or social media campaigns to build sustained momentum beyond episodic protests (Acharya, 2024, pp. 1-13).

In South Asia, this creates a broader pattern of youth-influenced political engagement and a form of shadow politics that leads formal party politics to take into account factors such as the corruptibility and accessibility of governance. Youth-led governance exhibits a fair degree of transparency, accountability, and participation in decision-making at the grassroots, regional, and national levels. Youth-led governance that is transparent, accountable, and a bottom-up process at the local, regional, and national levels. Such an approach strengthens civil society by elevating the voices of young people in policy decisions, governance, and institutional accountability, thereby yielding tangible results in education, employment, and social inclusion (Shadabi, 2025, pp. 525-534).

5. Issues of Concern for Gen Z in South Asia

Pre-COVID polls by Ipsos show that climate change and unemployment are two of Generation Z's top global concerns, nowhere more than in South Asia, which is currently mired in an unprecedented energy emergency as both India and Pakistan battle a crippling energy crisis. Over the past decade, issues of public attitudes toward government, immigration, race relations, Afghan refugees, economic progress, and education have been brought to the fore. The 2022 World Economic Forum Global Shapers Survey also noted that the digital economy and social media have increasingly politicised Gen Z, with political discourse increasing dramatically over the past year. Equality, diversity, and inclusion are just as important as climate change. The committee report cites models of inclusive development for adapting to this world. The searing themes are insecurity and an unknown future (Hamadeh, 2022).

5.1. Social Justice and Equality

The struggle for social justice and equality in South Asia is older than Generation Z itself, with caste-based discrimination still prevalent in India. At the same time, some ethnic divides persist in Bangladesh, too. While South Asia has been host to numerous social movements with their share of personalised, personality-based, and emotional mobilisation, we continue to see people from the current generation voice their demands for change, hinting at the continued relevance of these concerns.

Religious fundamentalism is another major impediment; even if the new generation can effect change at the village level, these questions will still hinder national development. Religious fundamentalism is a prominent contributor that subverts many rights, including education, employment and freedom of movement, particularly among students and young people. Moreover, as Generation Z calls for new regimes and society-wide fairness, entrenched interests are likely to resist change.

5.2. Economic Opportunities and Employment

Members of Gen Z were described as actively involved in ground-level movements, backed or criticised by a range of political actors across South Asia. However, a distinct political identity often arises from shared concerns under specific circumstances. It is therefore pertinent to examine the issues that Gen Z selects as the primary catalysts for their political participation and activism. The generation born around the mid-nineties faced new and emerging problems, which analysts and activists labelled the "Defining Issues for Generation Z in South Asia." These include climate change, the escalating cost of living, economic opportunities, and quality of education.

Following the widespread recognition of the destructive effects of climate change, economic concerns become the next most significant factor, capturing the attention of South Asian youth. The entire region confronts some of the highest inflation rates recorded in recent years. More specifically, younger generations are observing a global shortage of job openings, or a mismatch between labour market demand and supply. Planning the

forthcoming steps, they ask how those currently holding power in the region and having the means to change the trajectory of the economy intend to support young people in fulfilling their aspirations to establish independent lives capable of winning through the epochal challenges of the twenty-first century (Krishnamurthy et al., 2024, pp. 909-925)

5.3. Education and Access to Information

Education receives strong emphasis throughout South Asia, enabling the region's youth to benefit from the digital and political transformation that sets the region's young demographic apart. Amid high rates of university enrollment, online access, and social media use, Gen Z members are increasingly aware of political affairs. Large institutions (such as the Bangladesh Students' Union, the All Assam Students' Union, the Nepal Student Union, and the All India Students' Federation) and smaller collectives consistently initiate campaigns, protests, petitions, and online drives that highlight contemporary challenges. These groups and other youthful activists wield political clout and organise to challenge centralised power.

6. Challenges Faced by Gen Z in Political Participation

Gen Z does have a few significant obstacles; however, despite increasing political engagement. The tension on mainstream platforms through which Gen Z engages in activism is fueled by government censorship and restrictions on political speech (Memon et al., 2018, pp. 121–136). Z's ability to mobilise or crosstalk about issues is limited by political polarisation, which prevents strategic and casual attention to matters of concern (Tanaid & L. Wright, 2019, pp. 105–114). The third and final hurdle is limited access to opportunities and resources for many young people, which ensures that most will never be able to translate their activism into voting, political employment, or other forms of substantial ongoing engagement (Memon et al., 2018, pp. 121–136). If the regional political future is to be ensured, these need to be acknowledged and addressed.

6.1. Censorship and Freedom of Expression

In South Asia, media development and democratic governance are subjected to severe constraints. India is the world's largest democracy, but censorship restricts citizens' freedom of expression. Political resistance is alive and well under repressive regimes; censorship does not completely block expression. Red tape and riches stymie activism, and the mainstream media frequently refuse to address the systemic problem. Censorship functions as both a repressor and a stimulant of resistance. The tragic demise of Dalit activist Rohith Vemula highlighted caste bias and demonstrated how calls for justice cannot be silenced. Globalised South Asian youth are reviving their repressed rage against violence (Yuen & Lee, 2025, pp. 1213-1238).

This younger generation actively participates in political and cultural events, including seminars, book launches, and performances. On college campuses, everything associated with progressive values and alternative structures of governance flourishes when South Asian youth resist authoritarian restrictions

on speech. Politics will still matter, as opposition persists in stark contrast to what is often seen as a Western retreat. Censorship reflects public opinion and shifts in government confidence. Artists dissent, and when control becomes excessive, solidarity emerges. *Lipstick Under My Burkha*, the latest film to be banned for its content, demonstrates that free expression remains a work in progress. The Indian constitution comprises a multi-layered social fabric that hosts the movement between national and personal identifications (Jalli, 2025, pp. 1-11).

6.2. Political Polarisation

Global waves of political polarisation, and the youth in particular, are polarised. The generation Z political cohort, coming into view in the last few years, is looking for something different — a centre of gravity between traditional extremes that produced significant dysfunction, division and spastic violence. Gen Z's fierce independence accounts for the headlong pursuit of parties, candidates, and movements that embody aspirational principles of inclusion, diversity, social justice, rationality, science, anti-authoritarianism, transparency, and distributed power. Gen Z's refusal to accept the polarisation mantra, that your opponent is to be feared and defeated at all costs, is changing South Asia and the world (Martelli & Ari, 2018, pp. 263–300).

6.3. Access to Resources and Education

South Asia lacks adequate resources, education, or training for its political leaders and activists. Young people, introduced to political ferment in the previous decade, insist on educational freedom and have become restive at the lack of resources to effect change. Governments can exploit this imbalance by funding education and training programs. A tech-savvy young person is potentially the most excellent agent of destruction of old political hierarchies and relationships and a promoter of new investment and cooperation. In 2019, for instance, a large-scale protest involving millions of students occurred across all continents, while young people were actively participating in side events at the UN General Assembly (Feinberg & Salehyan, 2025, pp. 85-101).

The challenge of obtaining quality education in South Asia has contributed to the exclusion of millions of young people from democratic systems and social support networks. Access to formal education and political support structures is a fundamental platform for meaningful participation and transformation in the democratic practices of South Asia (Tanaid & L. Wright, 2019, pp. 105-114).

7. Future Implications of Gen Z's Political Influence

The research suggests an emerging political role for India's Gen Z. Despite their youth in the political cycle, these schools offer a view of political culture that warrants further examination. Effective migration governance can harness the potential of migration, but it must adapt to ensure that Gen Z also recognises digital platforms as vital. Cynicism about traditional politicians and narratives has been exacerbated among Gen Z, which, conversely, has led to a craving for authentic political speech and greater diversity within the political class.

South Asian voters are only now beginning to represent a generation that will one day dominate the voting space. The issue of future political leadership is complex and far-reaching, not only for the region but also for other regions. Generation Z is growing up in a high-tech world that fosters social disconnection while also enabling new forms of connection. Gen Z's embrace of social media enables connection to larger societies beyond local groups.

7.1. Potential Shifts in Political Power Dynamics

The ascension of Gen Z in South Asian politics may alter power dynamics and governance patterns across the region. They are taking part in or preparing mass protests on issues ranging from climate change and social inequality to education and unemployment. These uprisings have shaken established power relations and have been emblematic of a wider pattern of political mobilisation and power (Jude & P.P., 2025, pp. 1–18).

Digital media and the web provide new outlets for political action, even among 18–24-year-olds, but do not substitute for significant offline resources. There are blockers, such as power dynamics, censorship and social fracture. An ascending generation of leaders will have to bridge the internet's forms of expression with its forms of power. The impact of Gen Z in politics continues to grow, as increased civic engagement and activism portend a reshaped governance landscape in South Asia.

7.2. Long-term Changes in Policy and Governance

In South Asia, elites have historically been associated with access to formal resources, the state, and political pedigree. Digital Natives: Yet, while members of Generation Z are described as digital natives and grassroots activists, they have limited access to these traditional forms of social cachet. However, as of 2022 and into 2023, they have shown an increasing ability to disrupt and mould political discourse within the region.

The registration of Gen Z voters and the entry of youth into party membership are surging. There is an increasing understanding of development concerns and policy priorities, filtered through social media and chat rooms. They are, however, selective-censorship-ridden, real-name-registration-based, surveillance-driven platforms of polarisation and cyberbullying. The challenge of transforming protest into politics is central to turning mobilisation action into changes in governance and life opportunities (Ammassari et al., 2025).

8. Conclusion

Gen Z in South Asia is radically changing the political landscape of South Asian democracy. This research illustrates how the first generation of the digital age is using social media to bypass traditional gatekeepers and generate a 'youthquake', prioritising transparency, climate change, and social justice over historical party loyalties. Their transition from digital mobilisation to on-the-ground demonstrations in countries such as India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh also demonstrates their remarkable ability to sustain civic engagement. There are still significant challenges, however, including government censorship, extreme political polarisation, and the continued lack of resources. Moreover, even as Gen Z disrupts the old order and reshapes regional conversations, their

movement's success will depend on linking informal grassroots activism with formal policymaking for the long haul. As these voters become the most powerful voting bloc, their thirst for authentic leadership and inclusive governance is poised to disrupt South Asian sovereignty and lead the subcontinent toward a more digitally interactive era of political involvement.

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