SOCIAL MEDIA EMPOWERMENT: TURNING CONSUMERS INTO CONTRIBUTORS AMONG GENERATION Z IN INDONESIA–MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

The rapid growth of digital communication has positioned social media as a central platform for Generation Z, yet many young people remain passive content consumers rather than active contributors. This study examines how communication-based empowerment can strengthen digital literacy, participatory communication, and creative content production among Generation Z. Universitas Mercu Buana, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM), and SMK 47 South Jakarta collaborated to conduct an International Joint Community Service Program involving 34 vocational high school students. The study employed a Community-Based Participatory Approach (CBPA) integrated with Project-Based Empowerment (PBE). Data were collected through questionnaires, participant observation, documentation, and reflective group discussions and analyzed using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. The findings demonstrate improvements in digital awareness, critical media literacy, communication confidence, collaborative participation, and creative digital production, transforming participants from passive consumers into responsible content contributors. The study proposes the Rahman's Social Media Empowerment Communication Model (R-SMEC Model), comprising six stages: Digital Awareness, Critical Media Literacy, Communication Empowerment, Participatory Collaboration, Creative Digital Production, and Sustainable Social Contribution. The model positions communication as the central mechanism for sustainable youth digital empowerment and community development.

Keywords: Social Media Empowerment, Communication Empowerment, Digital Literacy, Generation Z.

1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of digital communication technologies has fundamentally transformed the ways in which people communicate, learn, participate, and construct social identities. Among all demographic groups, Generation Z represents the first generation to grow up entirely within a digitally connected environment, making social media an integral part of their daily lives. Platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp have become primary channels for communication, entertainment, education, creativity, and civic participation. Consequently, social media has evolved beyond a communication medium into a dynamic digital ecosystem where information, culture, and social interaction are continuously created, negotiated, and disseminated.

Despite these opportunities, the widespread adoption of social media has also generated significant communication challenges. Numerous studies have shown that although Generation Z demonstrates high levels of digital connectivity, many young users remain predominantly passive consumers of online content. Their digital activities are largely characterized by viewing, sharing, and reacting to information rather than producing educational, innovative, or socially beneficial content. Such consumption-oriented behavior increases exposure to misinformation, cyberbullying, algorithmic manipulation, digital dependency, and other communication risks that may hinder the development of critical thinking and responsible digital participation. These conditions were similarly observed during the preliminary assessment conducted at SMK 47 South Jakarta, where students displayed extensive access to digital platforms but relatively limited competencies in critical media evaluation, ethical communication, and creative content production. From the perspective of communication science, this phenomenon reflects a critical gap between technological accessibility and communicative empowerment. Access to digital technologies alone does not automatically produce meaningful participation or sustainable social contribution. Jenkins' concept of Participatory Culture argues that digital media provides opportunities for audiences to become active participants in content creation and knowledge sharing. Likewise, Livingstone's Media Literacy framework emphasizes that meaningful participation requires the ability not only to access information but also to critically analyze, evaluate, and create media content. These theoretical perspectives suggest that effective digital transformation depends on communication competencies that enable individuals to participate responsibly, collaboratively, and creatively within digital society.

Communication Empowerment Theory further extends this perspective by positioning communication as a process through which individuals acquire symbolic resources, negotiate meanings, participate in collective decision-making, and contribute to social development. Within this framework, Generation Z should no longer be viewed merely as digital audiences but as emerging communicators capable of producing knowledge, influencing communities, and contributing to sustainable digital societies. Therefore, transforming young people from passive consumers into active contributors represents both an educational objective and a strategic communication agenda for community development.

The International Joint Community Service Program conducted through the collaboration between Universitas Mercu Buana (Indonesia), Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM), and SMK 47 South Jakarta provides an appropriate context for implementing communication-based empowerment. Rather than concentrating solely on technical digital skills, the program integrates digital literacy, communication ethics, participatory communication, collaborative learning, mentoring, digital citizenship, and creative content production into a comprehensive empowerment framework. Through workshops, reflective discussions, project-based learning, and collaborative mentoring, participants are encouraged to develop communication competencies that enable them to become responsible contributors within digital communities while simultaneously strengthening intercultural collaboration between Indonesian and Malaysian higher education institutions.

Although previous community development programs have successfully promoted digital literacy, responsible internet use, and cyber safety, relatively few studies have conceptualized communication as the principal mechanism driving the transformation from passive media consumption to active digital contribution. Existing initiatives generally focus on improving technological competence or raising awareness of digital risks without adequately explaining how communication processes facilitate sustained behavioral change through participation, collaboration, reflection, mentoring, and creative production. Furthermore, international community service collaborations involving higher education institutions in Indonesia and Malaysia remain underrepresented within the communication and community development literature.

To address this theoretical and practical gap, this study introduces the Rahman's Social Media Empowerment Communication Model (R-SMEC Model) as a new communication-centered framework for community empowerment. Unlike existing models that separately emphasize digital literacy, participatory culture, digital citizenship, or communication empowerment, the R-SMEC Model conceptualizes communication as the central mechanism through which Generation Z progresses from passive consumers to active contributors via six sequential stages: Digital Awareness, Critical Media Literacy, Communication Empowerment, Participatory Collaboration, Creative Digital Production, and Sustainable Social Contribution. The model therefore provides a comprehensive explanation of how communication facilitates sustainable behavioral transformation within digital environments.

Accordingly, this article pursues three objectives. First, it describes the implementation of an international collaborative community service program designed to empower Generation Z through communication-based digital literacy. Second, it examines how communication empowerment enhances critical media literacy, participatory communication, collaborative learning, and creative digital content production among vocational high school students. Third, it proposes and provides preliminary empirical support for the Rahman's Social Media Empowerment Communication Model (R-SMEC Model) as an original communication framework that contributes to the advancement of organizational communication, digital communication, and community development studies while offering practical guidance for sustainable youth empowerment initiatives.

2. METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a Community-Based Participatory Approach (CBPA) integrated with Project-Based Empowerment (PBE) to examine the implementation of an International Joint Community Service Program collaboratively organized by Universitas Mercu Buana (Indonesia), Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM), and SMK 47 South Jakarta. The methodological design was selected because it emphasizes collaborative participation among academic institutions, schools, facilitators, and community members while promoting sustainable communication empowerment through experiential learning. Unlike conventional community service programs that primarily focus on one-way knowledge transfer, the CBPA-PBE framework encourages participants to become active collaborators throughout the entire empowerment process. Students were not treated as passive recipients of information but as active communicators who participated in identifying problems, discussing communication challenges, producing digital content, reflecting on their learning experiences, and evaluating program outcomes. This participatory orientation aligns with the communication empowerment perspective adopted in the present study, where

communication functions simultaneously as a learning process, an empowerment mechanism, and a catalyst for behavioral transformation.

Research Setting and Participants

The program was implemented at SMK 47 South Jakarta, Indonesia, through an international academic collaboration between Universitas Mercu Buana and Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia. The school was selected because preliminary observations indicated that its students demonstrated extensive use of social media but required further development in critical media literacy, ethical communication, collaborative participation, and creative digital content production.

The participants consisted of 34 vocational high school students representing Generation Z. Participants were purposively selected through coordination between the school administration and the organizing committee based on their willingness to participate in all program activities. The empowerment process also involved lecturers from both universities, university students serving as facilitators, school teachers, and administrative staff who collectively supported the implementation of the program. The involvement of multiple stakeholders created an authentic collaborative learning environment in which communication occurred across institutional, cultural, and educational boundaries.

Community Service Intervention

The empowerment program was implemented through five sequential phases designed to facilitate the progressive development of communication competencies.

Phase 1: Baseline Assessment

The first phase focused on identifying participants' initial levels of digital literacy, communication behavior, and patterns of social media use. Baseline information was collected through structured questionnaires, classroom observations, and preliminary discussions with participants. The assessment provided an empirical foundation for designing learning activities that addressed participants' actual communication needs.

Phase 2: Digital Literacy and Communication Workshop

The second phase consisted of interactive workshops introducing participants to digital literacy, media ethics, digital citizenship, anti-hoax awareness, and responsible online communication. Rather than relying exclusively on lectures, facilitators encouraged dialogue, case-based discussions, and collaborative reflection to promote critical thinking and ethical communication.

Phase 3: Participatory Communication Workshop

During the third phase, participants engaged in project-based learning activities involving digital storytelling, social media campaign design, creative content production, collaborative communication, and group problem-solving. Students worked in teams to develop educational digital content that addressed issues relevant to adolescents and responsible digital citizenship.

Phase 4: Collaborative Mentoring

The fourth phase emphasized continuous mentoring provided jointly by lecturers and university students. Participants received individualized feedback regarding communication strategies, creative content design, digital storytelling, and message effectiveness. Mentoring also encouraged participants to reflect upon their communication practices while improving collaboration and creative expression.

Phase 5: Reflection and Evaluation

The final phase evaluated both the learning process and communication outcomes. Participants presented their digital products, discussed their learning experiences, reflected on behavioral changes, and completed post-program evaluations. This reflective stage enabled facilitators to assess not only participants' knowledge acquisition but also the development of communication confidence, collaborative engagement, and digital contribution.

Data Collection

Multiple sources of evidence were employed to ensure methodological rigor through data triangulation. The first, structured questionnaires were administered before and after the intervention to assess participants' perceptions regarding digital literacy, communication confidence, participatory behavior, and responsible social media use. Second, participant observation was conducted throughout the workshops and mentoring sessions to document communication interactions, collaborative learning processes, participant engagement, and behavioral changes. Third, documentation analysis was undertaken to examine participants' digital products, workshop materials, presentation slides, photographs, and institutional documentation generated during the program. Fourth, reflective group discussions were organized at the conclusion of the intervention to explore participants' experiences, perceptions, and reflections concerning communication empowerment and digital participation. The combination of these four techniques enhanced the credibility and richness of the collected data by integrating quantitative and qualitative evidence.

Data Analysis
Quantitative data obtained from questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques, including frequencies, percentages, mean scores, and comparisons between pre-intervention and post-intervention responses. These analyses provided an overview of changes in participants' digital literacy, communication confidence, and participatory behavior following the implementation of the empowerment program. Qualitative data derived from participant observations, reflective discussions, and documentation were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis. The analysis consisted of six iterative stages: familiarization with the data, initial coding, theme development, theme review, theme definition, and interpretation. This analytical procedure enabled the researchers to identify recurring patterns associated with communication empowerment, collaborative learning, behavioral transformation, and digital contribution while maintaining transparency throughout the interpretation process.

Trustworthiness of the Study
To enhance the credibility of the findings, methodological triangulation was employed by combining questionnaires, observations, documentation, and reflective discussions. Data interpretation was conducted collaboratively by members of the research team to minimize individual bias and ensure analytical consistency. In addition, continuous observation throughout the implementation process allowed the researchers to compare participants' communication behaviors before, during, and after the intervention. This approach strengthened the dependability of the findings and supported the preliminary validation of the proposed Rahman's Social Media Empowerment Communication Model (R-SMEC Model).

Ethical Considerations
Participation in the program was entirely voluntary. Before data collection, participants received clear explanations regarding the objectives of the program, the educational nature of the activities, data confidentiality, and the voluntary nature of their participation. Institutional permission was obtained from Universitas Mercu Buana, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia, and SMK 47 South Jakarta before program implementation. To protect participants' privacy, all information collected during questionnaires, observations, discussions, and documentation was used exclusively for academic purposes and reported in aggregate form without revealing participants' individual identities.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Implementation of the International Social Media Empowerment Program
The International Joint Community Service Program was successfully implemented through a collaborative partnership involving Universitas Mercu Buana (Indonesia), Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM), and SMK 47 South Jakarta. The program engaged 34 vocational high school students representing Generation Z and adopted a communication-centered learning approach integrating digital literacy, participatory communication, collaborative mentoring, and project-based learning. Throughout the implementation process, participants actively engaged in interactive workshops, group discussions, creative content production, and reflective learning activities. Unlike conventional training programs characterized by one-way information delivery, this intervention emphasized dialogue, collaboration, and active participation, allowing students to experience communication as both a learning process and an empowerment mechanism. The intervention was implemented through five sequential phases: baseline assessment, digital literacy workshops, participatory communication workshops, collaborative mentoring, and reflective evaluation. These phases provided a structured communication environment in which participants progressively developed communication competencies while producing socially meaningful digital content.

Improvement in Digital Communication Competencies
Observational data collected throughout the program indicated substantial improvements in participants' communication competencies. At the beginning of the program, most participants primarily viewed social media as a platform for entertainment, characterized by passive consumption of videos, viral trends, and recreational content. During subsequent workshops and mentoring sessions, participants increasingly recognized social media as a platform for learning, collaboration, creativity, and community engagement. Students demonstrated noticeable improvements in several communication-related competencies. They became more confident in expressing opinions, participating in discussions, asking critical questions, evaluating digital information, and presenting creative ideas during collaborative activities. The mentoring process also encouraged participants to communicate more responsibly while considering ethical aspects of digital interaction. These findings indicate that communication-centered empowerment contributes not only to improved digital literacy but also to enhanced communicative confidence and collaborative participation.

Transformation from Digital Consumers to Active Contributors
One of the most significant findings of the program was the observable transformation in participants' communicative roles. Before participating in the intervention, students primarily identified themselves as consumers of digital content

who interacted with social media through browsing, viewing, liking, and sharing existing materials. Following the implementation of the empowerment program, participants demonstrated increasing engagement in producing original digital content, including educational posters, short educational videos, creative storytelling materials, and social media campaign concepts promoting responsible digital behavior. This transformation illustrates a progressive shift from passive media consumption toward active communication participation and knowledge production. Rather than merely interacting with existing information, participants became capable of creating communication products intended to educate peers, promote ethical social media practices, and contribute positively to their digital communities.

Development of Collaborative Communication

The implementation process also strengthened collaborative communication among participants. Working in small groups encouraged students to exchange ideas, negotiate meanings, solve communication problems collectively, and support one another throughout the content production process. Collaborative interaction was further enhanced through continuous mentoring provided by lecturers and university students from Indonesia and Malaysia. The international partnership created opportunities for intercultural communication, enabling participants to experience different perspectives regarding digital ethics, responsible communication, and creative media production. Such collaborative learning environments contributed to the development of communication skills extending beyond individual competence toward collective knowledge construction.

Preliminary Validation of the Rahman's Social Media Empowerment Communication Model (R-SMEC Model)

Empirical observations obtained during program implementation provide preliminary support for the proposed Rahman's Social Media Empowerment Communication Model (R-SMEC Model). The implementation demonstrated that communication empowerment evolved progressively through six interconnected stages:

1. Digital Awareness, during which participants developed greater awareness of both the opportunities and challenges associated with digital media.
2. Critical Media Literacy, characterized by participants' increasing ability to critically evaluate online information, recognize misinformation, and apply ethical judgment.
3. Communication Empowerment, reflected in improved confidence to express opinions, communicate ideas, and participate actively in collaborative discussions.
4. Participatory Collaboration, demonstrated through teamwork, collaborative planning, dialogue, and shared decision-making.
5. Creative Digital Production, represented by participants' ability to develop original educational digital content using multiple communication formats.
6. Sustainable Social Contribution, reflected in participants' willingness to continue producing educational and socially responsible digital content beyond the duration of the community service program.

The consistency of these sequential stages throughout the intervention provides preliminary empirical evidence supporting the conceptual structure of the R-SMEC Model.

Program Outputs

The community service program generated both tangible and intangible outcomes. Tangible outputs included educational training modules, digital literacy materials, presentation resources, documentation videos, creative digital products developed by participants, and preliminary manuscripts prepared for scientific publication and intellectual property registration. More importantly, the program produced intangible outcomes in the form of strengthened communication culture, increased collaborative learning, greater communication confidence, improved digital responsibility, and stronger commitment among participants to contribute positively within digital communities. These outcomes demonstrate that communication-centered empowerment generates broader educational impacts extending beyond immediate learning achievements.

Key Empirical Findings

Three major empirical findings emerged from the implementation of the program. First, communication empowerment should be understood as a continuous communication process rather than a single educational intervention. Sustainable behavioral transformation occurred gradually through repeated cycles of dialogue, mentoring, collaboration, reflection, and creative practice. Second, digital literacy alone was insufficient to transform communication behavior. Meaningful behavioral change emerged only when digital literacy was integrated with participatory communication, collaborative learning, and continuous mentoring. Third, the transformation from digital consumers into active contributors required the development of an enabling communication ecosystem involving educational institutions, international academic partners, facilitators, peer collaboration, and supportive digital learning environments. Collectively, these findings provide preliminary empirical support for the proposed Rahman's Social Media

Empowerment Communication Model (R-SMEC Model) and demonstrate its potential as a communication-centered framework for community empowerment among Generation Z.

Communication Empowerment as a Transformative Communication Process

The findings of this study demonstrate that communication-centered empowerment functions as a transformative process capable of reshaping Generation Z's communicative behavior within digital environments. Rather than serving merely as a vehicle for information dissemination, communication emerged as the primary mechanism through which participants developed critical awareness, collaborative competence, creative confidence, and social responsibility. This finding supports Servaes' (2008) argument that communication should be understood as a participatory process that enables individuals to become active agents of social change rather than passive recipients of information. Throughout the implementation, communication was embedded in every stage of the learning process through dialogue, collaborative reflection, mentoring, and creative participation. Consequently, participants were not only exposed to new knowledge but also experienced meaningful communicative interactions that facilitated behavioral transformation. Unlike conventional digital literacy programs that frequently emphasize technical competence, the present intervention demonstrates that sustainable empowerment requires continuous communication processes capable of strengthening participants' confidence, interaction, and collaborative learning. Therefore, communication should be regarded not merely as an instructional medium but as the fundamental architecture through which empowerment is achieved.

Extending Participatory Culture: From Participation to Meaningful Contribution

The present findings extend Jenkins' (2006) concept of Participatory Culture by demonstrating that participation alone does not necessarily generate meaningful social contribution. Before participating in the program, students actively interacted with digital platforms through viewing, sharing, commenting, and following online trends. However, these activities remained largely consumption-oriented and rarely resulted in educational or community-oriented communication. The implementation findings indicate that participation becomes socially meaningful only when supported by communication empowerment mechanisms that include mentoring, collaborative learning, reflective dialogue, and creative production. These communication processes gradually enabled participants to transform personal creativity into digital content capable of educating peers and contributing positively to digital communities. Accordingly, this study proposes that participation should not be considered the final objective of digital empowerment. Instead, participation should function as an intermediate stage leading toward sustainable communication contribution. This conceptual refinement extends Participatory Culture by introducing communication empowerment as the mechanism connecting participation with long-term social contribution.

Communication as the Core Mechanism Linking Digital Literacy and Social Transformation

Media literacy has traditionally been conceptualized as an individual's ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and create media content (Livingstone, 2004; 2008). While these competencies remain essential, the present findings suggest that media literacy alone is insufficient to produce sustainable behavioral transformation. Participants entered the program with relatively high levels of technological familiarity but demonstrated limited capacities for critical evaluation, ethical communication, collaborative interaction, and educational content production. These observations indicate that technological competence does not automatically translate into communicative competence. The findings therefore support a communication-centered perspective in which communication functions as the mechanism connecting digital literacy with social participation. Through dialogue, collaborative reflection, mentoring, and collective knowledge construction, participants gradually transformed technological competence into communicative competence capable of generating meaningful social contribution. This finding contributes to communication scholarship by emphasizing that communication—not technology—is the primary driver of digital transformation.

Communication Empowerment and Responsible Digital Citizenship

Another important contribution of this study concerns the relationship between communication empowerment and digital citizenship. Previous literature generally conceptualizes Digital Citizenship in terms of online ethics, digital safety, responsible technology use, and information literacy. While these dimensions remain important, the present findings demonstrate that responsible digital citizenship develops more effectively through participatory communication than through normative instruction alone. Participants were encouraged to discuss ethical dilemmas, misinformation, cyberbullying, digital privacy, and responsible communication through collaborative dialogue and shared reflection. Such communicative interactions enabled students to negotiate meanings, exchange experiences, and collectively construct ethical understanding. These findings reinforce Ribble's Digital Citizenship framework while simultaneously extending it by positioning communication as the central mechanism through which ethical awareness and responsible digital behavior are cultivated.

Theoretical Contribution: Rahman's Social Media Empowerment Communication Model (R-SMEC Model)

The principal theoretical contribution of this study lies in the development of the Rahman's Social Media Empowerment Communication Model (R-SMEC Model). Although previous theories—including Participatory Culture, Communication Empowerment, Media Literacy, Uses and Gratifications Theory, Digital Citizenship, and the Prosumer Concept—provide valuable explanations regarding digital communication behavior, they generally address these concepts independently. Existing literature offers limited explanation of how communication systematically transforms individuals from passive digital consumers into active contributors through sequential empowerment processes. The R-SMEC Model addresses this theoretical gap by conceptualizing communication as the primary transformational mechanism operating through six interconnected stages:

- Digital Awareness
- Critical Media Literacy
- Communication Empowerment
- Participatory Collaboration
- Creative Digital Production
- Sustainable Social Contribution

Unlike previous frameworks that position communication primarily as an instructional medium, the R-SMEC Model conceptualizes communication as the dynamic architecture through which awareness evolves into participation, participation develops into creativity, and creativity ultimately generates sustainable social contribution. Accordingly, the model represents a communication-centered theory of digital empowerment rather than simply an extension of digital literacy or participatory communication theories.

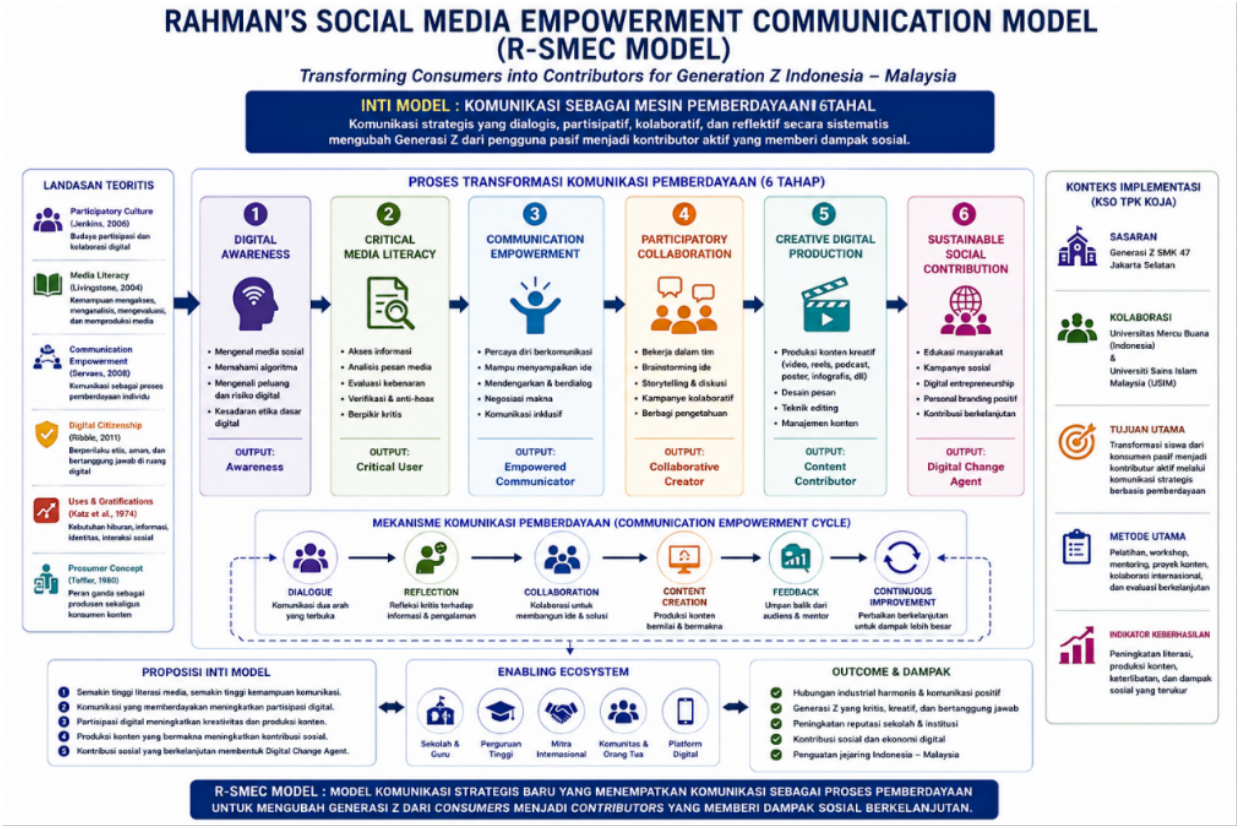

Figure 1. Rahman's Social Media Empowerment Communication Model

Implications for Organizational Communication and Community Development

The present findings have important implications for both organizational communication and community development. From an organizational communication perspective, educational institutions should view communication as a strategic organizational capability that facilitates collaborative learning, participatory leadership, knowledge sharing, and creative innovation. From a community development perspective, empowerment initiatives should move beyond awareness campaigns toward communication ecosystems that continuously encourage dialogue, mentoring, collaborative production, and community participation. Furthermore, international partnerships between higher education institutions provide valuable opportunities for strengthening intercultural communication while expanding sustainable community empowerment practices across national boundaries.

Practical Implications
The R-SMEC Model provides a practical communication framework that may be replicated by schools, universities, governmental institutions, and community organizations implementing digital literacy and youth empowerment programs. Rather than organizing isolated seminars focusing exclusively on technological competence, practitioners should adopt sequential communication empowerment strategies emphasizing dialogue, critical literacy, collaborative learning, creative production, reflective practice, and sustainable contribution. Such an approach has the potential to strengthen digital resilience, communication competence, ethical awareness, collaborative creativity, and responsible digital citizenship among Generation Z.

Scientific Contribution
This study contributes to communication scholarship in four significant ways. First, it introduces the Rahman's Social Media Empowerment Communication Model (R-SMEC Model) as an original communication framework explaining how communication systematically transforms Generation Z from passive digital consumers into active contributors. Second, it extends Communication Empowerment Theory by demonstrating that empowerment develops through iterative cycles of dialogue, mentoring, collaborative learning, creative production, and reflective communication rather than through one-way information transfer. Third, it enriches Organizational Communication, Digital Communication, and Community Development by positioning communication—not technology—as the central mechanism underlying sustainable behavioral transformation. Finally, the study provides empirical evidence from an international community service collaboration between Indonesian and Malaysian higher education institutions, illustrating how cross-border academic partnerships can simultaneously generate community impact and theoretical innovation in communication science.

4. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that communication-centered empowerment constitutes an effective approach for transforming Generation Z from passive consumers of social media into active contributors capable of producing meaningful, ethical, and socially valuable digital content. Through the implementation of an International Joint Community Service Program involving Universitas Mercu Buana (Indonesia), Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM), and SMK 47 South Jakarta, the findings confirm that communication should be understood not merely as a channel for information dissemination but as a strategic process that facilitates critical awareness, collaborative learning, creative participation, and sustainable social engagement.

The implementation further demonstrates that sustainable digital empowerment cannot be achieved solely through the improvement of technological competence or digital literacy. Instead, meaningful behavioral transformation requires a communication ecosystem characterized by dialogue, mentoring, collaborative learning, reflective practice, and creative content production. These communication processes enable participants to gradually develop communicative competence, critical media literacy, communication confidence, and collaborative capability, thereby supporting their transition from passive digital audiences to responsible contributors within digital communities.

The principal theoretical contribution of this study is the development of the Rahman's Social Media Empowerment Communication Model (R-SMEC Model). The model introduces a communication-centered explanation of digital empowerment by conceptualizing communication as the primary mechanism driving behavioral transformation through six sequential stages: Digital Awareness, Critical Media Literacy, Communication Empowerment, Participatory Collaboration, Creative Digital Production, and Sustainable Social Contribution. Unlike existing perspectives that examine media literacy, participatory culture, communication empowerment, or digital citizenship independently, the R-SMEC Model integrates these dimensions into a coherent communication process that explains how communicative interaction produces sustainable digital participation and social contribution.

Beyond its theoretical significance, the study offers important practical implications for educational institutions, universities, governmental agencies, and community organizations implementing youth empowerment programs. The findings suggest that communication-based interventions should prioritize collaborative participation, critical reflection, mentoring, and creative production rather than relying exclusively on technology-oriented training. The R-SMEC Model therefore provides a practical framework that can be adapted to various educational and community contexts seeking to strengthen digital citizenship, communication competence, and responsible participation among young people.

Overall, this study demonstrates that international community service initiatives can generate both tangible societal benefits and meaningful theoretical advancement in communication science. By positioning communication as the driving force of empowerment rather than merely as a supporting educational tool, the Rahman's Social Media Empowerment Communication Model (R-SMEC Model) contributes to the advancement of Organizational

Communication, Digital Communication, Communication for Community Development, and Communication Empowerment Theory. The model also provides a robust conceptual foundation for future communication research and community engagement initiatives aimed at preparing Generation Z to become responsible digital citizens, collaborative communicators, and active contributors within an increasingly interconnected global society.

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