SOUTH ASIAN JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES & HUMANITIES

ISSN: 2582-7065 (Online) SAJSSH, VOL 7, ISSUE 3, PP. 24-43

Social Media and Gen-Z Revolution in Nepal: An Analytical Study

Naveen Kumar[2] & Ajay Kumar[2]

[1]Research Scholar (Graduate Level), Department of Political Science, Ramanujan College, University of Delhi, Kalkaji, New Delhi, India.

[2]Professor, Department of Political Science, Ramanujan College, University of Delhi, Kalkaji, New Delhi, India.

Corresponding Author: Dr Ajay Kumar, **Email:** ajay.kumar@ramanujan.du.ac.in
ORCID ID: 0000-0001-9831-1373

Received: 15th February 2026 **Accepted:** 19th April 2026 **Published:** 5th June 2026

ABSTRACT

The "Gen-Z Revolution" in Nepal in September 2025 was a historic turning point in South Asian politics. The way social media restrictions mobilised an entire generation to take to the streets and the protests that continued until the government fell make it an excellent subject for academic research. The ban imposed by the Nepalese government on September 4, 2025, on twenty-six social media platforms (Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, etc.) was not merely a regulatory measure; it ignited pent-up frustration against decades of corruption, unemployment, and nepotism. Nepal's Gen-Z, which is highly active digitally, perceived this ban as the final blow to their freedom of expression. Nepal has witnessed decades-long struggles—such as the anti-Rana regime movement of 1951 or the ten-year Maoist People's War—yet this particular sequence of events unfolded with such intensity that it altered the very equation of power overnight. Therefore, this study examines the reasons behind this revolution and analyses how a "digital blackout" paved the way for a real-world revolution, resulting in a power shift.

Keywords: Crony-capitalism, Digital Rights, Nepokids, People's Journalism, Political instability, Virtual Space

DOI: 10.48165/sajssh.2026.7302

INTRODUCTION

Generation-Z alias Gen-Z, born primarily between 1997 and 2012, is a generation raised in a completely digital environment. Gen Z's worldview holds that *personal is political*, but *political is not personal*—viewing life as an 'exemplar' rather than a platform for formal propositions. This generation values practical living over moralising, leading to a digital-first existence where virtual interaction is preferred over physical presence. Consequently, their approach to democracy is defined by a shift away from organised movements toward sporadic, leaderless, and decentralised protests that lack traditional ideological frameworks (Gudavarthy, 2026). This youth group is deeply dissatisfied with the current political leadership, rising inflation, and declining employment opportunities (Cammaerts, 2025). This wave of youth-led movements, which began with the *Arab Spring* of 2011-12 and the *Brazilian Spring* (2013), has now expanded to include *Myanmar's Spring Revolution* (Chambers & Dhu Da, 2024) and *Southeast Asia's Milk Tea Alliance* (Khor, 2024). In these movements, social media has emerged not only as a source of information but also as a powerful weapon for restoring democracy and social justice. The digital activism of this generation has not only transformed old ways of working but also laid the foundation for regime change in Bangladesh in 2024 (Islam et al., 2025) and Sri Lanka in 2022 (Jayathilake, 2019). The latest evidence of this is the two-day youth uprising in Nepal in September 2025, which completely transformed the government there.

Nestled in the Himalayas, Nepal, once known for its traditional politics and slow pace of change, is now undergoing an unprecedented digital revolution. This revolution is driven not by any political party or foreign power, but by Nepal's youth—known as "Gen-Z." Armed with the power of smartphones and the internet, this generation is completely transforming Nepal's social and political structure (Khan, 2025).

In Nepal, 'Gen Zs' are not just internet users, but have now become 'digital activists' and agents of change. While older generations relied on traditional newspapers and radio for information, for Gen Z, *TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp, YouTube, X, LinkedIn, Reddit, and Signal* are their parliament and court. They are using these platforms not just for entertainment, but to hold the government accountable, expose corruption, and challenge social evils (Poudel, 2024).

The most visible example of this revolution is the transformation of Nepal's politics over the past few years. The victory of independent candidates like Balen Shah in Kathmandu (Regmi

DOI: 10.48165/sajssh.2026.7302

Wagle, 2024) and the success of digital campaigns like “No Not Again” (Karki, 2022) have proven that social media is no longer just a game of “likes” and “shares”, but has become the most powerful tool for shaping public opinion. Gen Z has shown that they are not afraid of the old system; instead, they demand a transparent and progressive Nepal (Dahal & Acharya, 2025).

In short, the convergence of social media and Gen-Z in Nepal marks the beginning of a new era. It is an era in which a viral video has more impact than the echoes of the corridors of power, and in which democracy has moved from closed rooms to the palms of every young person, i.e., the mobile screen (Acharya, 2025).

RESEARCH PROBLEM

The youth unemployment rate in Nepal is approximately 70%, whereas the total unemployment rate in Nepal is approximately. 20% (See Figure 1), and a significant portion of the country’s GDP (around 33%) comes from remittances sent by migrant workers. The younger generation was using online spaces not only for communication but also for employment and political activism. The main research question is whether the social media ban was merely an immediate trigger or whether it brought to the surface deeper economic and social grievances that traditional politics had failed to address.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Was the social media ban by the Nepalese government a deliberate attempt at “digital repression”?
- How did Gen-Z manage to organise and sustain such large-scale protests and acts of violence despite being leaderless?
- Does this movement mark the beginning of the end of traditional party politics in Nepal?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This research is significant not only in the context of Nepal but also for the entire South Asian region (after Sri Lanka and Bangladesh). It suggests that for the ‘digital native’ generation, the right to the internet is now equivalent to a basic human right and suppressing it can lead to consequences as far-reaching as regime change.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

DOI: 10.48165/sajssh.2026.7302

- Understanding the discrepancy between the Nepali government's stated rationale of 'social harmony' and the actual political pressures (such as the #NepoKids trend).
- Understanding the functioning of this movement, which was decentralised and operated without any formal political party.
- Examining how alternative channels like VPNs and TikTok, etc., kept communication alive and mobilised the crowds.
- Assessing the role of young people in the resignation of Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli and the formation of the interim government.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A mixed method has been used for the study. Quantitative methods for data analysis and qualitative methods for interviews and talks are used. Primary Sources, such as research reports, government records, and speeches of youth involved in the protests, digital activists, and journalists, are collected or observed on digital media. Secondary Sources, such as research papers, reputable journals, books, and analyses by international media outlets (Al Jazeera, BBC, Reuters), are used for analysis.

HYPOTHESES

H1: The social media ban intensified feelings of relative deprivation among young people, compelling them to take to the streets.

H2: Traditional political parties completely failed to understand the demands of Gen-Z and their digital language.

H3: 'Digital rights' have now become a basic necessity for Nepalese youth, akin to food, clothing, and shelter.

ANALYZING THE REASONS BEHIND THE GEN-Z'S REVOLUTION IN NEPAL

Here are some of the reasons given that started this revolution in Nepal:

A. Socio- economic condition and Relative Deprivation

We can understand in detail how the social media ban incited this sentiment among Nepali youth and brought them out on the streets through these key points. The theory of relative deprivation (Gurr, 2015) can be applied here.

DOI: 10.48165/sajssh.2026.7302

Nepal's Gen-Z considers itself not just a citizen of Nepal, but a global citizen. Social media (such as *TikTok, Instagram, WhatsApp, and Twitter*) was their window to the world. When the government banned social media, Nepali youth compared their situation to that of youth in India, the United States, and Europe (Ramachandran, 2025). They saw that youth around the world were enjoying freedom of expression, while they were being silenced in their own country. This left them feeling left behind and deprived of their democratic rights. This fear of missing out (FOMO) turned into anger (The Kathmandu Post, 2025, September 7).

Unemployment has been a major problem in Nepal. As a result, social media became the sole source of income for many youth (content creation, digital marketing, and small business promotion) (Sharma, 2025). When the ban was imposed, their source of income suddenly ceased. They realised that the government was unable to provide employment, but was also taking away the self-employment they had created. When young people began to feel financially insecure and compared their own circumstances to the luxuries of their leaders, the issue of "economic deprivation" emerged. This frustration led to street protests (Kumar, 2024).

Bishnu et al. (2025) examined the macroeconomic factors behind youth unemployment in Nepal. The authors sought to understand why "development indicators" such as GDP growth, foreign investment (FDI), and remittances are failing to generate employment for Nepal's youth. The study found that remittances and foreign direct investment (FDI) increased unemployment rather than reducing it. The reason was excessive reliance on remittances, which prevented domestic industries from flourishing in Nepal. Young people had no choice but to go abroad, while those who stayed faced a shortage of "sustainable jobs." GDP growth increased youth participation in the labour force, but did not guarantee them employment. This has been termed "Jobless Growth," in which the country is statistically getting richer, yet the youth remain unemployed. The study also indicates that Nepal's education system is not aligned with market demands, resulting in the highest unemployment rate among educated youth. The long-term impact of globalisation and free trade has been negative for jobs in Nepal, as it has weakened local manufacturing. The 2025 revolution wasn't just about the social media ban, but rather, it was an explosion of "structural unemployment". The study proves that the government's FDI and remittance-based policies have completely failed. The youth realised that the current system couldn't provide them with jobs, so they demanded a system change. The study says FDI is coming in, but jobs aren't, so this is the same situation where the youth see money coming into the country (to politicians and big business), but their

DOI: 10.48165/sajssh.2026.7302

pockets are empty (Khatri, Poudel, & Acharya, 2025; Vijay, 2025). The unemployment rate from 1991 to 2025 is shown in the bar chart below.

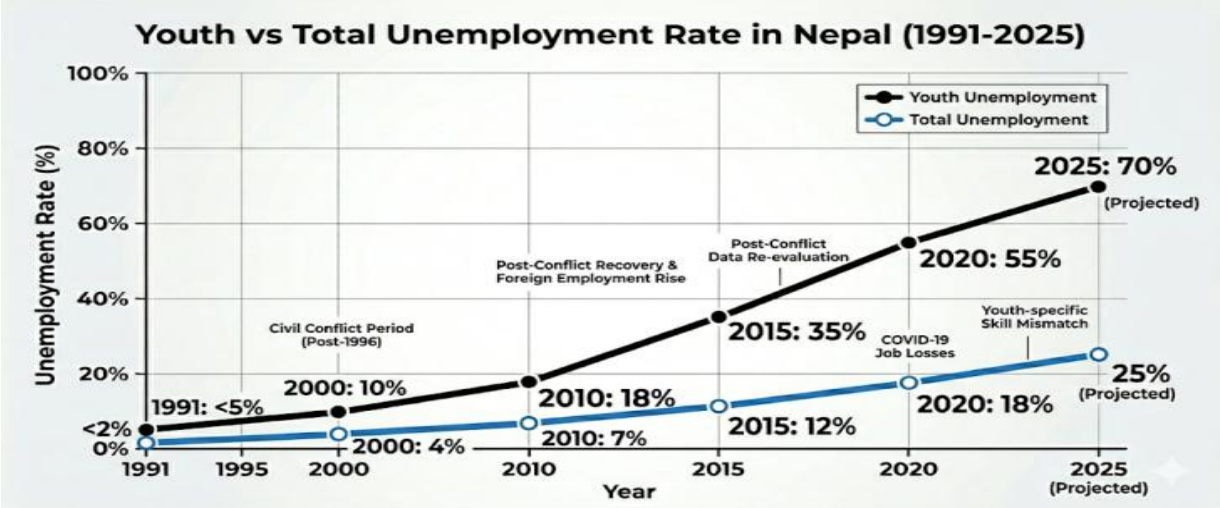


Figure 1: Youth vs Total Unemployment Rate in Nepal (1991-2025)

Source: *ILO, World Bank and Nepal Bureau of Statistics and Available on https://www.macrotrends.net/datasets/global-metrics/countries/npl/nepal/youth-unemployment-rate*

In addition, corruption in Nepal wasn't limited to administrative bribery; it permeated the very fabric of the system in the form of "Crony Capitalism" (Timalsina, 2024) and major political scandals (such as the fake Bhutanese refugee scam and the Lalita Niwas land scam), forcing Gen-Z to take to the streets (Karki, 2025). The younger generation saw that while employment opportunities were dwindling and they were forced to migrate to Gulf countries for work, the ruling leaders and their close business houses were plundering the country's resources (Mulmi, 2024). The clearest evidence of this anger was the massive protest in September 2025, when thousands of young people took to the streets of Kathmandu, chanting "Jail the Corrupt!" (Scarr et al., 2025). Nepal's consistently poor ranking in Transparency International's 'Corruption Perception Index' (NewBiz Report, 2026, Feb.10) and audio tapes of corruption leaked on social media served as the fuel for this revolution, inspiring young people to demand systemic change through digital tools (VPN and TikTok) without any traditional leader.

B. Nepotism and Visibility Gap

To gain a deeper understanding of corruption and the influence of "nepokids" in Nepal, it's important to examine the major scandals and examples that transformed youth anger into movements. The *Fake Bhutanese Refugee Scam* was considered the most shameful scandal in

DOI: 10.48165/sajssh.2026.7302

Nepal's history. In this scam, top politicians and their close associates (nepokids and relatives) extorted crores of rupees from Nepalese citizens by posing as fake Bhutanese refugees and promising to send them to the United States. The exposure of this scandal made young people realise that those in power can even sell the identities of their own citizens for money (Bhandari, 2023). In the *Lalita Niwas Land Scam*, Government land near the Prime Minister's residence (Baluwatar) in Kathmandu was transferred to the names of land mafias and the children of politicians. This plunder of government property by "nepokids" and their families sparked widespread public outrage at a time when ordinary citizens were struggling to afford a small home (Ghimire, 2024).

Institutions like Nepal's Public Service Commission were accused of political interference. Youth discovered that government scholarships and high-ranking positions were often held by those with political connections, leaving meritorious youth with no option but to go abroad (Basnyat, 2025). These scandals created a "visibility gap." On the one hand, ordinary youth struggled with unemployment, while on the other hand, politicians' children flaunted their lavish lifestyles and expensive hobbies on social media (Instagram/TikTok). This disparity prompted Gen-Z to abandon traditional parties and seek alternative leadership (Lamichhane, 2021; Bhandari, 2025).

Then, Nepali youth used the digital space as a strategic tool to expose "nepokids" and systemic corruption, with hashtags like "#NoNotAgain" and "#EnoughIsEnough" creating a powerful wave. Through "people's journalism" on *TikTok* and *Instagram*, youth made viral videos of the lavish lifestyles and expensive properties abroad of the children of politicians whose parents feigned simplicity at home. Particularly during the "*fake Bhutanese refugee scam*," youth shared data visualizations and infographics with slogans like "Where is our money?" and "Not for Sale" to make complex scams easily understandable to the public (Freedom Forum, 2025, Sep. 8). These campaigns, defying traditional media censorship, directly reached the public, breaking the social acceptance of "nepokids" and, for the first time, holding politicians accountable in a digital "public court" (Timalsina & Shrestha, 2025).

For Nepal's youth, social media was not just a source of entertainment, but also a platform to hold the government accountable (such as the #NoNotAgain campaign). Young people felt that the government was moving toward "Digital Authoritarianism" instead of listening to criticism. They felt they were being deprived of the transparent democracy promised by the

DOI: 10.48165/sajssh.2026.7302

2006 People's Movement or Constitution. When freedom of speech was taken away in the "virtual space," they were left with only the "physical space"—the streets—to express their views (Hasugian, Komalasari, & Sundawa, 2025).

The social media ban cut young people off from each other and the world. In the information age, information poverty is considered the greatest form of poverty. Nepali youth felt that the government was deliberately keeping them in the dark so they could not organise. When online communities and digital solidarity broke down, young people were forced to organise in person. The ban added fuel to the fire (Arafat et al., 2025).

Thus, the social media ban significantly widened the "gap between expectation and reality" in the minds of Nepali youth. They expected a modern, digital, and democratic Nepal, but in reality, they found restrictions and censorship. This relative deprivation transformed their anger into a revolution, driving them to the streets.

C. Political Parties and Communication Gap

Nepal has witnessed a revolutionary shift in youth social media usage between 2000 and 2025 (See Figure 2). While internet penetration was negligible (less than 1%) in the early 2000s, the popularity of Facebook and the advent of affordable smartphones laid a solid foundation for this growth after 2010. The expansion of 4G services by Ncell and NTC, and the introduction of affordable data packs after 2015, further accelerated this growth, leading to a 68% usage rate by 2019. Digital dependency during the COVID-19 pandemic and the rise of video-sharing apps like TikTok led to an unprecedented surge in usage, with the usage rate rising 86% by 2023. According to current trends, approximately 91.5% of Nepal's youth will be digitally active by 2025, highlighting the pivotal role of social media in Nepal's politics, especially in Gen Z-led movements and social behaviour. This difference can be observed in the graph below (Rijal et al., 2025).

DOI: 10.48165/sajssh.2026.7302

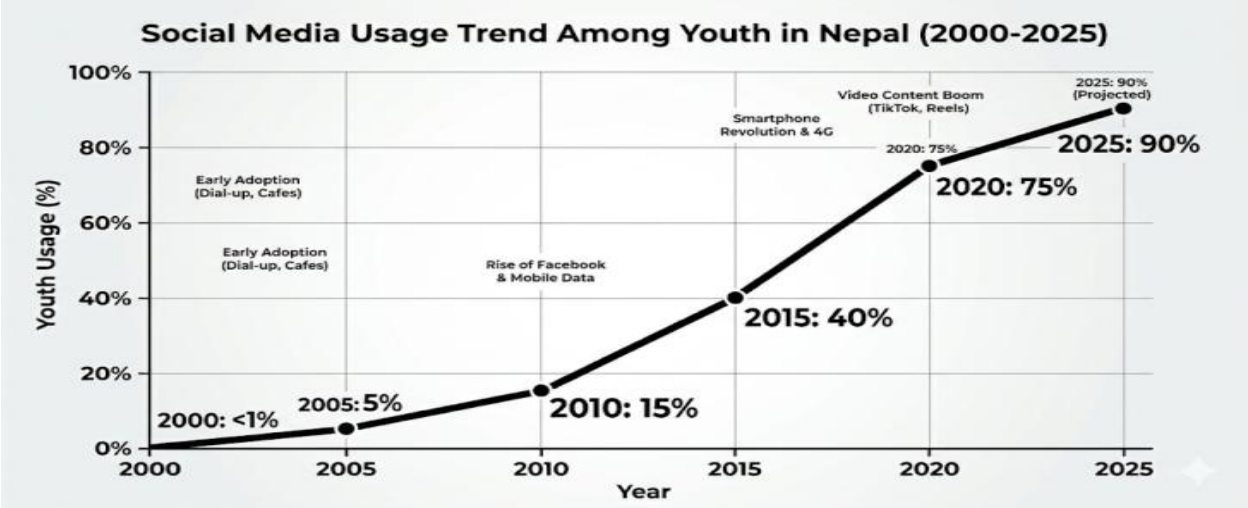


Figure 2: Social Media Usage Trend among Youth in Nepal (2000-2025)

Source: *Nepal Social Media Users Survey 2021, Centre for Media Research in Nepal and Rijal et al., 2025)*

Moreover, there was not just an age difference between Nepal's traditional parties (like Nepali Congress, UML, and Maoist Centre) and 'Gen Z', but also a big difference in 'communication' and 'culture'. We can understand this failure in three main dimensions:

- *(i) The Failure to Understand Digital Semiotics*

Traditional leaders saw social media as merely a means of "propaganda," while for Gen Z, it was a platform for "survival" and "identity." Older leaders delivered hours-long, boring, one-sided speeches. In contrast, Gen Z adopted memes and 15-second reels as their political language. For example, when leaders made serious nationalist statements, young people created satirical memes to counter them. Parties failed to understand this "irony" and misinterpreted it as "insult," further widening the divide (Sangwa, 2025). Parties were busy counting crowds at rallies, while the real mobilisation was happening through hashtags (like #NoNotAgain) (Rauniyar et al., 2023). He dismissed the digital outrage as "just the noise of some internet users", which was his biggest mistake (Wijaya, Chandra & Dananjaya, 2024).

- *(ii) Mismatch of Demands*

There was a stark difference between the leaders' and the youth's priorities. We can see this as a political version of Maslow's Hierarchy (Maslow & Lewis, 1987). Parties were still discussing contentious ideological issues, such as the 1990 and 2006 revolutions, socialism, and Maoism. Gen Z was interested in the present, not history (Snellinger, 2018). Their demands were pragmatic—why aren't passports easy to obtain? Why are there delays in

DOI: 10.48165/sajssh.2026.7302

getting driving licenses? Why is the internet slow? Why is there so much pollution in the city? Parties were selling the dream of a "Great Nepal," while youth were demanding a "Livable Nepal." Parties expected "cadre-based" loyalty (that is, since my father voted for this party, I will too). Gen Z is "issue-based." They said, "We don't care what you did in 1990; what are you doing for us in 2025?" Leaders' communication was 'top-down'—they spoke, the public listened. Gen Z's communication is 'horizontal'—they want dialogue and instant feedback. When leaders turned off comments on social media or blocked criticism, it was perceived as "weakness" and "dictatorial" (O'Neill, 2025). Table 1 below can illustrate this well.

Table 1: *Difference between Traditional Parties and Gen-Z's Activities and Outcomes*

Dimension	**Traditional Parties**	**Gen-Z**	**Result / Conflict**
Language	Formal, Rhetorical	Casual, Visual, Memes, Satirical	Disconnection
Medium	Rallies, posters, TV, newspapers	Tiktok, Twitter (X), Instagram, Podcasts	Failure to Deliver the Message
Issues	Nationalism, History, Political Alliances	Governance, Climate Change, Mental Health	Crisis of Relevance
Approach	Hierarchy/ Feudal	Egalitarian/ Flat	Clash of Values

This failure wasn't just technical; it was cognitive. Traditional parties were "digital immigrants" trying to speak the language of "digital natives," but their accent was so off that young people couldn't connect with them (Upreti et al., 2025). The success of leaders like Balen Shah stemmed from their not learning Gen Z's language but living it.

- *(iii) Balen Shah As a Youth Icon*

The success of Balendra Shah (commonly known as Balen) stemmed from his authenticity. When traditional leaders used social media, it seemed like a PR (Public Relations) stunt, but

DOI: 10.48165/sajssh.2026.7302

Balendra Shah's every move felt like a natural part of the Gen-Z lifestyle. Here are three concrete examples that prove he was living the Gen-Z "cultural language". Nepal's traditional leaders stand on stage and deliver hours of speeches using heavy language (such as socialism, nationalism, and sacrifice). Gen-Z was tired of this language. Before entering politics, Balen Shah was an established rapper. For Gen-Z, rap music wasn't just entertainment; it was a language of resistance. Balen's songs reflected the same anger, frustration, and irritation with the system that the average Nepali youth felt (Chhetri, 2025). So, while other leaders tried to create quirky dances or reels (which often felt cringey) to appeal to the youth, Balen didn't have to try. His "rebel and cool" style was natural. He didn't give speeches; he performed. Traditional politics always took place behind closed doors, which Gen-Z considered a den of corruption. For example, soon after becoming mayor, Balen Shah decided to broadcast the first board meeting of the Kathmandu Metropolitan Municipality (KMC) on Facebook Live (Gurung & Gnawali, 2025). This was like "reality TV" for Gen-Z. They saw firsthand how decisions were made and who was obstructing development work. Gen-Z needs "receipts" (proof). Balen put the evidence directly into the public's hands via live video. He didn't need to issue a press release; the public saw the truth with their own eyes. This was the rawest and truest form of "e-governance" (Sultana & Sharma, 2025).

Election symbols in politics are usually trees, the sun, or hammers and sickles, which symbolise old ideologies. For example, Balen Shah's election symbol was a walking stick (Lauro), and his sunglasses became his trademark. The Lauro became a meme, a symbol. The youth reinterpreted it as a weapon to "teach corrupt leaders a lesson" rather than "support older leaders." Traditional leaders feign simplicity in *khadi* or *daura-suruwal*. Balen didn't change his modern look (T-shirt, glasses, beard). The message was: "I'm not here to change; I'm here to change the system." Thus, Balen Shah's communication was not 'performative' but 'participatory'. While traditional leaders used social media as a 'loudspeaker' (one-way), Balen Shah used it as a 'mirror' in which Gen Z saw their reflection. This example clarifies the difference between digital literacy and digital culture. Traditional leaders had literacy (they could tweet), but Balen had culture (they knew the sentiment behind the 'tweet') (H.T. News Desk, 2025, Sep. 9).

Balen Shah's electoral success was a result of his 'cultural authenticity', where his hip-hop background enabled him to speak the language of dissent—a skill that previous leaders lacked (Sharma & Neupane, 2025). Furthermore, according to *The Himalayan* (2022), the

DOI: 10.48165/sajssh.2026.7302

live streaming of executive meetings created a discrepancy in governance, transforming it into 'consumable digital content' for Gen-Z, making politics a part of their digital lives (Ram, 2022).

D. Political Instability in Nepal and Youth

It is crucial to analyse the political developments in Nepal since 1990 and the resulting youth discontent. This disillusionment among Nepali youth is not a single incident, but the accumulation of decades of failures. Since the restoration of multi-party democracy in 1990, Nepal has experienced extreme political instability. Since 1990, Nepal has seen dozens of changes of government. The average tenure of a prime minister has been less than two years. Leaders like Sher Bahadur Deuba, K.P. Sharma Oli, and Pushpa Kamal Dahal (Prachanda) have repeatedly come and gone from power. Young people saw this as "*a game of musical chairs"*, where only power changed, not policies and intentions. Youth felt that leaders were limited to propaganda and slogans. The devastating 2015 earthquake and the subsequent promulgation of a new constitution had given young people hope for a "prosperous Nepal," but political infighting shattered those hopes. The average age in Parliament remained very high, leaving Gen-Z feeling that no one understood their aspirations (Ojha et al., 2024; Suwal, 2025).

The 2025 uprising was a result of this decades-old anger. Youth launched campaigns like #NoNotAgain to express their frustration. The success of culturally authentic leaders like Balen Shah proved that the youth had completely broken with the old political class of the 1990s. For Nepali youth, the post-1990 governments were merely a shadow of the past. Their survival required them to overthrow the old system. The 2025 uprising was not just about changing the government, but about securing their identity and future (Sudan, 2025).

E. Alternative Channels and Gen-Z Mobilisation

A detailed examination of alternative media like *VPNs* and *TikTok* from a Nepalese perspective highlights how technology challenges traditional power structures. For instance, VPNs became tools of digital resistance and security. In Nepal, when the Election Commission tried to ban the #NoNotAgain campaign, terming it a 'cybercrime', VPN became not just software but a digital refuge for the youth. The government instructed Internet Service Providers (ISPs) within Nepal to block specific URLs and social media pages. VPNs bypass these barriers by encrypting traffic, ensuring the continuity of communication. Youth resorted to VPNs to avoid state tracking of their digital footprints.

DOI: 10.48165/sajssh.2026.7302

This provided youth with the ‘digital autonomy’ to express their opinions and plan rallies without fear of legal action. With the help of VPNs, Nepali youth were able to communicate ground realities to international media and human rights organisations, increasing global pressure on the government. VPNs helped conceal their identities, making it difficult for police to catch online organisers. The Swiss company Proton VPN reported a surge in sign-ups from Nepal during the movement (NDTV News Desk, 2025, Sep. 10).

Not only this, *TikTok* has become a mobilisation hub for the masses. *TikTok* transformed Nepal’s political landscape through visual communication. *TikTok’s* algorithm, compared to *those of Facebook and Twitter, quickly spreads local trending topics*. Youth, through short videos, satire, and lip-syncing, exposed the outdated and contradictory statements of traditional leaders. *TikTok* was a major factor in the success of leaders like Balen Shah. His supporters created 15-30 second clips of his hip-hop songs and his actions, establishing him as a cultural icon. During the two-day 2025 uprising, *TikTok* livestreams provided information on rally locations and times (NDTV News Desk, 2025, Sep. 9). While mainstream news channels downplayed the protests, TikTok’s live videos brought the situation to millions.

In the case of Nepal, it was observed that politics was no longer limited to speeches, but had become ‘Consumable Digital Content’. Balen Shah's live-streamed executive meetings garnered millions of views on *TikTok* and *YouTube*. This made governance transparent and allowed young people to feel part of the decision-making process. While traditional leaders used old, formal methods, Gen Z used music, memes, and graphics on *TikTok*. This ‘language of protest’ was incomprehensible to traditional leaders, and they failed to counter it. The *Discord app*, popular among gamers, was used to plan the protests. Organisations like Hami Nepal connected thousands of young people on Discord servers to strategise (Kharel, 2025). When the internet was also slowed down, protesters used apps like BitChat, which could send messages without an internet connection via Bluetooth or Wi-Fi Direct (Sharma, 2025).

This case in Nepal proves that while VPNs provided survival, *TikTok* served as a means of identity and propagation. During the 2025 uprising, these alternative channels created a “parallel information system” that even internet shutdowns failed to suppress. This makes it clear that for Gen-Z, social media is not just a means of propaganda, but an essential part of their democratic existence. The movement lacked a single leader and relied entirely on digital networks, leaving the government at a loss as to whom to engage.

DOI: 10.48165/sajssh.2026.7302

During the Gen-Z movement in Nepal in September 2025, the government banned approximately twenty-six social media platforms, including *Facebook, WhatsApp*, and *Instagram*. Despite this, the methods adopted by Nepal's youth for communication and mobilisation have become a prime example of the modern digital revolution. When Nepali youth began protesting on the streets against corruption and "nepokids" in 2024-25, it was a moment of anger. At that time, they had no formal "model," just a protest. As the movement grew, the youth realised that mere protest was not enough; they needed an alternative vision. Then the 7Ds were defined under a campaign called "Navodaya". This vision was driven, in particular, by young people who were already part of political parties (Gen-Z members) but were fed up with their own party's outdated working style. They used these 7Ds to transform the spirit of revolution into an organisational framework. Here is a brief description of the 7Ds vision: (1) *Dignity*: Protecting the self-respect of every citizen and youth, where politics is based on respect, not flattery. (2) *Democracy*: Not limiting democracy to mere voting, but embracing it with participation and transparency. (3) *Dedication*: Unwavering dedication to nation-building, rather than self-interest and corruption. (4) *Discipline*: Instilling discipline in political workers and institutions to ensure the smooth functioning of the system. (5) *Digital Transformation*: Making government services and governance completely digital to reduce corruption and speed up work. (6) *Delivery*: Effectively delivering health, education, and other services to the public, not just making promises. (7) *Development*: Building sustainable and modern infrastructure that creates future opportunities for youth. The role of the media, especially digital media, was crucial to the promotion and success of the 7D Campaign (i.e. Nabodaya Campaign). It was designed as a "digital-first movement" rather than a "traditional political campaign." This clever use of media connected the youth of remote villages of Nepal with this 'Navodaya' thinking, due to which it became a campaign of the entire country instead of being just a movement of Kathmandu (Dahal, 2026).

GEN-Z AND DISMISSAL OF THE NEPALI GOVERNMENT

Faced by growing youth anger and street clashes with the police, K.P. Sharma Oli's coalition partners (such as Prachanda's Maoist Party) withdrew. They felt that remaining with Oli would erode their support base. When Oli refused to resign and attempted to re-influence Parliament, a civil war-like situation developed in the country. Amid public pressure and mounting tensions with security forces, the President, in accordance with constitutional norms, decided to dismiss the government and establish an impartial system. Sushila Karki's arrival at the centre of the interim government marked a historic turning point in Nepal's

DOI: 10.48165/sajssh.2026.7302

politics. When K.P. Sharma Oli's government was dismissed following massive youth protests and a constitutional crisis, the country was looking for a leader with an unblemished and fearless image. The fall of the Oli government created a constitutional vacuum in the country. Public trust in political parties was at a low ebb. In such a situation, political parties were unable to agree on a single leader. The public was strongly opposed to the "old faces" (Oli, Deuba, Prachanda). Meanwhile, Sushila Karki has a reputation as an "Iron Lady." As Chief Justice, she took strong decisions against corruption. To resolve the 2025 crisis, a proposal was made to form an "Interim Election Government" headed by an independent political leader. Due to her impartiality, Sushila Karki was appointed as the lead or chief guide of this "High-Level Interim Council." After some time, she became the first female Prime Minister of Nepal (Aryal, 2025).

CONCLUSION

The role of youth has always been crucial in Nepal's democratic struggles. Still, the Gen-Z movement of September 2025 was distinct and strikingly different from all previous student movements in history (such as the 1980s). This was not merely a political protest, but a "youth roar" against the system that shook the old regime. This "Gen-Z Revolution" of 2025 has been a turning point in Nepal's history. It has been proven that Nepal's politics is no longer just a game between the old guard (Oli, Deuba, Prachanda), but that youth power on the streets can overthrow the government. The ban on social media (especially *TikTok* and other apps) by the K.P. Sharma Oli government was not just a technical decision but a direct attack on the 'freedom of expression' of the digital generation (Gen Z). This move by K.P. Sharma Oli backfired, costing him his seat. The stature he had built in Nepali politics over the past decade collapsed like a house of cards in the face of this "digital rebellion". The fall of K.P. Sharma Oli teaches us that in the modern era, no government can remain in power for long by ignoring the collective power of the internet and the youth. This movement was unique in this way because it proved that today's generation has the power to challenge power not only on the streets but also online.

DOI: 10.48165/sajssh.2026.7302

REFERENCES

Acharya, U. (2025). Misinformation and Democracy. In Acharya, U.(edited). Nepal's Misinformation Landscape. Center for Media Research – Nepal Kathmandu, Nepal.

Arafat, M. Y., Mia, M. S., Imran, M. I. H., & Islam, M. R. (2025). Reflections from Uprising: The Role of Youth and Social Media in Political Movements In Nepal And Indonesia. *International Journal of Education and Social Science Studies*, *1*(3), 191-199.

Aryal, N. (2025). Nepal in Turmoil: Gen Z Protest, Political upheaval, and the Quest for Reform. SSRN Electronic Journal. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.5498279

Basnyat, Binoj. (2025, June 18). Institutional Politicization, Corruption and Governance Inefficiency in Nepal. KhabarHub. https://english.khabarhub.com/2025/18/477847/

Bhandari, A. (2025). Nepal Gen Z Protests: Comprehensive Socio-Economic Analysis and Recovery Framework. *Available at SSRN 5468410*. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.5468410

Bhandari, B. (2023, July 3). Nepal Shaken by Fake Bhutanese Refugee Scam: A weary Nepali public hopes for a rare victory against corruption. *Foreign Policy.* https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/07/03/nepal-fake-bhutanese-refugee-scam-anti-corruption/

Cammaerts, B. (2025). What will be the legacy of the Gen-Z acephalous protest movements?. *Media@ LSE*.

Chambers, J., & Dhu Da, S. N. (2024). "Living With" Revolution: The Everyday Experiences of Myanmar's Generation Z Revolutionaries. Journal of Contemporary Asia, 54(5), 781–800. https://doi.org/10.1080/00472336.2024.2359373

Chhetri, Vivek. (2025, Sep. 14). From rap battles to rallies, Kathmandu's mayor Balen rises as Nepal's youth icon. *The Telegraph*. online. https://www.telegraphindia.com/life/from-rap-battles-to-rallies-kathmandus-mayor-balen-rises-as-nepals-youth-icon-prnt/cid/2122952#goog_rewarded

Dahal, G. (2026). Gen Z Protest and Its Prospects in Strengthening Democracy in Nepal. *Journal of Political Science*, 26, 203–216. https://doi.org/10.3126/jps.v26i1.90796

Dahal, R., & Acharya, U. (2025). An Anatomy of Information Manipulation in Nepal. *Nepal's Misinformation Landscape*, 25–50. https://doi.org/10.62657/cmr25aa

Freedom Forum. (2025, Sep.8). Journalists injured while reporting on Gen Z protest in Kathmandu. *IFEX*. https://ifex.org/journalists-injured-while-reporting-on-genz-protest-in-kathmandu/#:~:text=Civil%20society%20organizations%20released%20a,during%20treatment%20in%20the%20hospital.

Ghimire, B. (2024, Feb. 15). Ex-officials convicted, politicians acquitted in Lalita Niwas scam: Two years jail for several convicts, including Bhatbhateni's Gurung, ex-secretary Basnyat. *The Kathmandu Post*.

DOI: 10.48165/sajssh.2026.7302

https://kathmandupost.com/national/2024/02/15/special-court-acquits-former-ministers-as-it-convicts-civil-servants-on-lalita-niwas-land-scam

Gudavarthy, A. (2026, Feb. 21). Gen Z and the Dynamics of Democratic Engagement. *The Hindu*. Delhi.

Gurr, T. R. (2015). *Why Men Rebel*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315631073

Gurung, K., & Gnawali, S. (2025). Emoji Votes: Predicting Kathmandu's 2022 Mayoral Election via Facebook Sentiment. *Journal of Information Science Theory and Practice*, *13*(3), 72-84.

H.T. News Desk. (2025, Sep. 9). Who is Balendra Shah? Kathmandu rapper-mayor backed by Gen Z protestors for Nepal PM post. *Hindustan Times*.

Hasugian, A., Komalasari, K., & Sundawa, D. (2025). From digital dissent to political change: social media's impact on Nepal's 2025 protests. *Media Asia*, 1–10. https://doi.org/10.1080/01296612.2025.2578665

Islam, M. A., Nur, S., Mahmud, I., Rakiv, M., Nazneen Noor, R., & Moniruzzaman, M. (2025). Gen Z's digital uprising in Bangladesh: The role of social media in the fall of a political despot. *Social Sciences & Humanities Open*, 12, 102181. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2025.102181

Jayathilake, H. D. (2019). Retention of Generation-Z in the Information Communication Technology Sector of Sri Lanka: A Conceptual Paper. *Kelaniya Journal of Human Resource Management*, 14(1), 17. https://doi.org/10.4038/kjhrm.v14i1.64

Karki, S. (2025). Policy Level Corruption in Nepal: How Laws are Bent to Serve Political and Bureaucratic Interests. *Available at SSRN 5623333*. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.5623333

Karki, S. (2022, November 3). "Many Nepalis say no, not again". *Nepali Times*. Retrieved 4 November 2022.

Khan, A. Neogi (2025, September 9). "Nepal in Crisis: Tribhuvan Airport Closed, Nationwide Flights Cancelled as Gen Z Youth Protest Social Media Ban and Demand PM Oli's Resignation". *Travel And Tour World*. Retrieved 10 September 2025.

Kharel, Samik. (2022, Sep. 15). 'More egalitarian': How Nepal's Gen Z used gaming app Discord to pick PM. *Aljazeera*. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/9/15/more-egalitarian-how-nepals-gen-z-used-gaming-app-discord-to-pick-pm#:~:text=By%20then%2C%20Nepal's%20Gen%20Z,to%20figure%20it%20out%20together.%E2%80%9D

Khatri, B. B., Poudel, O., & Acharya, P. (2025). Factors Affecting Youth Unemployment in Nepal. *Molung Educational Frontier*, 15, 1–32. https://doi.org/10.3126/mef.v15i01.73932

Khor, Y. L. (2024). Mapping the Transnationalisation of social movements through online media: the case of the Milk Tea Alliance. In *The Palgrave Handbook of Political Norms in Southeast Asia* (pp. 121–136). Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore.

DOI: 10.48165/sajssh.2026.7302

Kumar, N. K. (2024). Effects of unemployment and inflation on the economy of Nepal. *Rajarshi Janak University Research Journal*, 2(1–2), 42–49. https://doi.org/10.3126/rjurj.v2i1-2.72303

Lamichhane, Y. R. (2021). "Enough Is Enough": A Cultural Turn of Youth Activism in Nepal. *The Outlook: Journal of English Studies*, 1–15.

Maslow, A., & Lewis, K. J. (1987). Maslow's hierarchy of needs. *Salenger Incorporated*, *14*(17), 987–990.

Mulmi, A. (2024, Jan. 29). Nepal's youth are leaving the country in droves. Raisina Debates. *Observer Research Foundation (ORF)*. https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/nepals-youth-are-leaving-the-country-in-droves#:~:text=Why%20do%20Nepalis%20move%20abroad,were%20issued%20by%20the%20government.

NDTV News Desk. (2025, Sep. 10). 8,000% Spike in VPN Sign-Ups in Nepal after Social Media Ban. *NDTV World*. https://www.ndtv.com/world-news/nepal-protests-8-000-spike-in-vpn-sign-ups-in-nepal-after-social-media-ban-9245250

NDTV News Desk. (2025, Sep. 9). How TikTok Became The Go-To Communication Tool For Nepal Protesters. *NDTV World*. https://www.ndtv.com/world-news/nepal-protests-kp-sharma-oli-how-tiktok-became-the-go-to-communication-tool-for-nepal-protesters-9243083

NewBiz Report. (2026, Feb. 10). Nepal Fails to Improve in Corruption Perceptions Index. *Business Age*. https://www.newbusinessage.com/news/47366/nepal-fails-to-improve-in-corruption-perceptions-index/#:~:text=Transparency%20International%20Nepal%20(TIN)%20said,institutions%20up%20to%20August%202025.

O'Neill, T. (2025). "What Kind of Freedom Are You Talking About?": Youth Deliberation and Plurality in Nepal. *Journal of Applied Youth Studies*. https://doi.org/10.1007/s43151-025-00195-w

Ojha, S. K., KC, R. K., Dahal, S., & Basnet, J. (2024). The Socio-Economic Development of Nepal: Struggle with Political Instability. How Political Instability is Compromising Nepal's Future. *Development*, *19*(1).

Poudel, A. (2024). The Impact of the TikTok Ban on Digital Expression in Nepal. *The Annapurna* Express.

Ram. K. (2022, May, 31). Mayor Shah's live telecast meeting earns him plaudits. *The Himalayan*. https://thehimalayantimes.com/nepal/mayor-shahs-live-telecast-meeting-earns-him-plaudits

Ramachandran, S. (2025, Sep. 12). Nepal Unrest: Roots Of Turmoil Lie In Economic Deprivation. *The Secretariat*. https://thesecretariat.in/article/nepal-unrest-roots-of-turmoil-lie-in-economic-deprivation

Rauniyar, K., Poudel, S., Shiwakoti, S., Thapa, S., Rashid, J., Kim, J., ... & Naseem, U. (2023). Multi-aspect annotation and analysis of Nepali tweets on anti-establishment

DOI: 10.48165/sajssh.2026.7302

election discourse. *IEEE Access*, *11*, 143092-143115.

Regmi, W. P. (2024). The Effect of Social Media on Result of Election in Metropolitan City: Special Focus on Kathmandu, Nepal.

Rijal, N., Poudel, B., Pokharel, K. R., Gurung, L., Adhikari, B. N., Adhikary, S., ... & Khanal, D. (2025). An investigation of regulating and monitoring social media in Nepal. *Journal of Health and Social Welfare*, *13*(1).

Sangwa, S. (2025). Generation Z Global Protests: Elite Influence, Memetic Warfare, and the Quest for a New World Order. *Open Journal of Stigmatized Knowledge & Suppressed Discourses (ISSN: 3105-3033)*, *1*(2).

Scarr, Charlotte, Fraser, S. & Ethirajan, A. (2025, Sep. 9). Nepal Parliament set on fire after PM resigns over anti-corruption protests. The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC).

Sharma, B. K., & Neupane, G. (2025). Masculinity and violence in Kathmandu's Raw Barz rap battles on YouTube. *Language, Culture and Society*, 7(1), 68–97. Portico. https://doi.org/10.1075/lcs.24031.sha

Sharma, B. (2025, Sep. 15). Nepal protest: GenZ used this 'secret chat app' after govt banned social media. *Hindustan Times*. https://www.hindustantimes.com/technology/nepal-protest-genz-used-this-secret-chat-app-after-govt-banned-social-media-101757919039327.html

Sharma, S. (2025). For Nepal's Gen Z, social media is more than a pastime: Content creators rake in $26.5 million in FY24-2025; Facebook, X drive digital economy. *Bhaskar English*. https://www.bhaskarenglish.in/

Snellinger, A. (2018). From (violent) protest to policy: Rearticulating authority through the national youth policy in post-war Nepal. *Modern Asian Studies*, *52*(3), 1043–1075.

Sudan Gurung, Sudan. (2025, Sep. 21). Sudan Gurung clarifies his visit to President's Office: The leader of the Hami Nepal group says he had only gone there to check on party leaders who had no remorse for protest killings. *The Kathmandu Post*. https://kathmandupost.com/national/2025/09/21/sudan-gurung-clarifies-his-visit-to-president-s-office

Sultana, S., & Sharma, B. K. (2025). Rap in the local–global interface: Social and political activism in South Asia. In *Entangled Englishes* (pp. 32–51). Routledge.

Suwal, S. (2025, November 17). The 2025 Gen Z Uprising in Nepal: A Three-Part Analysis. Harvard T.H. Chan. https://hsph.harvard.edu/atrocity-prevention-lab/news/the-2025-gen-z-uprising-in-nepal-a-three-part-analysis/

The Kathmandu Post (2025, September 7). "Nepal's Social Media Restrictions Raise Concerns over Digital Freedom and Investment Climate." *The Kathmandu Post*.

Timalsina, S. K. (2024). Crony Capitalism in Nepali Politics. *The Journal of Economic Concerns*, *15*(1), 56–72.

DOI: 10.48165/sajssh.2026.7302

Timalsina, S. K., & Shrestha, S. K. (2025). Hidden Politics behind the Gen-Z Movement (2025, September) in Nepal. *Educational Journal*, 4(2), 64–72. https://doi.org/10.3126/ej.v4i2.88527

Upreti, A., Pokhrel, L., Ban, H., & Gurung, K. (2025). Decoding digital campaigns: A multi-method analysis of Facebook posts during 2022 parliamentary elections in Nepal. *Asia Pacific Journal of Information Systems*, *35*(1), 195–215.

Vijay. (2025, Oct. 23). Seven Theses on the Gen Z Uprisings in the Global South: The Forty-Third Newsletter (2025). *TricOriental*. Newsletter. https://thetricontinental.org/hi/newsletterissue/gen-z-vidroh/

Wijaya, C. K., Chandra, K. R., & Dananjaya, I. K. (2024). Mitigating Disinformation: Reflection of# NoNotAgain Campaign in Nepal for Indonesia. *Uti Possidetis: Journal of International Law*, *5*(1), 38–67.

DOI: 10.48165/sajssh.2026.7302