

# Digital Vernaculars: A Systematic Literature Review on Indonesian Gen Z Slang Across Social Media Platforms

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## A B S T R A C T

Slang has emerged as a defining element of Indonesian Gen Z communication, particularly across social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and WhatsApp. This linguistic trend reflects creativity, identity construction, and peer solidarity but also raises concerns over language change and the preservation of standard Indonesian. This study conducts a systematic literature review (SLR) to synthesize peer-reviewed research on Indonesian Gen Z slang, focusing on its types, characteristics, communication contexts, platform-specific patterns, and research gaps. Following PRISMA guidelines, searches were conducted in various databases including Semantic Scholar, PubMed, Google Scholar. Inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied, and eligible studies were analyzed thematically. The findings indicate that slang is formed through diverse morphological and phonological processes, including clipping, blending, and code-mixing with English (Indoglish), and that usage adapts to formality, audience, and platform culture. While qualitative methods dominate existing studies, research on regional variations, long-term educational impacts, and strategies to balance slang use with standard language remains limited. This review consolidates fragmented scholarship into a structured overview, providing a foundation for future research and offering insights for linguists, educators, and policymakers concerned with preserving linguistic heritage while embracing digital-era language innovation.

**Keywords:** *Digital Communication, PRISMA, Linguistic Identity, Language Change, Indonesian Gen Z*

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## INTRODUCTION

Slang has emerged as a vibrant and creative linguistic register, especially prominent among youth communicating in digital spaces. Rather than indicating language decay, slang often reflects linguistic innovation, enabling speakers to adapt their language to diverse contexts while signalling identity and group belonging (Chapel, 1998; Dumas & Lighter, 1978). Digital platforms accelerate this process by fostering new vocabulary, abbreviations, and stylistic trends that spread rapidly through online interaction (Androutopoulos, 2014). Globally, studies have shown that slang plays a crucial role in identity construction, in-group solidarity, and the expression of creativity among young people (Chapel, 1998; Coleman, 2012).

In Indonesia, the rise of internet connectivity and social media platforms such as WhatsApp, TikTok, Instagram, Twitter (X), and YouTube has intensified the creation and circulation of slang among Gen Z (Budiasa, 2021; Kusyairi, Nisa, et al., 2024). While these expressions enrich linguistic diversity, they have also raised concerns among educators, linguists, and policymakers regarding potential erosion of standard Indonesian and its implications for language preservation (Barus et al., 2023; Siregar et al., 2024). The dual nature of slang; as both a marker of creativity and a potential disruptor of linguistic norms, underscores the importance of systematically mapping current research in this area.

Although a number of studies have examined Indonesian Gen Z slang from linguistic, sociocultural, and media perspectives, the findings remain fragmented, often limited to single platforms, small sample groups, or specific linguistic processes. Comprehensive synthesis is lacking, particularly in exploring cross-platform variations, longitudinal effects on language proficiency, regional differences, and strategies to balance informal language innovation with standard language maintenance. These gaps point to the need for a systematic literature review to consolidate existing findings, identify patterns, and outline future research directions.

This systematic literature review (SLR) aims to map and synthesize existing research on Indonesian Gen Z slang usage across social media platforms, highlighting prevailing themes, patterns, and research gaps to guide future studies. The objectives are to:

*Identify peer-reviewed studies examining Indonesian Gen Z slang in social media contexts.*

*Categorize the key themes, contexts, and linguistic features addressed in the literature.*

*Map research trends over time, including platforms studied and methodological approaches.*

*Pinpoint underexplored areas and research gaps for future investigation.*

The study addresses the following research questions:

*What are the types and linguistic characteristics of Indonesian Gen Z slang used on social media?*

*Which social media platforms and communication contexts have been the primary focus of these studies?*

*What research methods have been employed in existing studies on Indonesian Gen Z slang in social media contexts?*

*What key gaps and underexplored areas can be identified from the existing literature?*

Addressing these research questions requires a systematic and structured approach to synthesizing existing scholarship. Accordingly, this study adopts the principles of a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to ensure transparency, replicability, and comprehensive coverage of relevant research. The review process involved defining precise inclusion and exclusion criteria, conducting targeted searches across academic databases, and systematically coding the selected studies to identify patterns, themes, and gaps. The methodological steps applied in this review are detailed in the following section.

## METHOD

This SLR followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines (Moher et al., 2009) to ensure transparency, replicability, and comprehensive reporting. The review protocol was designed prior to data collection to establish search strategies, inclusion/exclusion criteria, and data extraction methods. A comprehensive literature search was conducted between January to June 2025 using both manual database searches and AI-assisted retrieval. Databases included Semantic Scholar, PubMed, Google Scholar and other major databases, supplemented with exploratory searches via Consensus AI to broaden keyword coverage. Search terms were covered three main concepts (1) Language (e.g.: slang, youth language, vernacular), (2) Population (e.g.: Generation Z, Gen Z), and (3) Context (e.g.: Indonesian, social media, digital communication, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube). As for the inclusion and exclusion criteria are presented in the table below.

Table 1: Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria of Selecting the Articles

Inclusion	Exclusion
Published between 2020 and 2025	Studies not focused on slang or youth language
Focus on Indonesian slang used by Generation Z	Research not set in Indonesia or involving Indonesian speakers
Examines usage in at least one social media platform	Grey literature, opinion essays, blogs, or news reports
Peer-reviewed journal articles	Articles without accessible full text

All records retrieved were imported into Mendeley for reference management. Duplicate entries were identified and removed. The selection process consisted of three stages (1) Title and Abstract Screening to exclude the irrelevant studies, (2) Full-Text Screening to ensure they met inclusion criteria, and (3) Final Selection - to determine the eligible studies to be included in the synthesis. The screening process is illustrated in a PRISMA flow diagram, which records the number of studies identified, screened, excluded, and included.

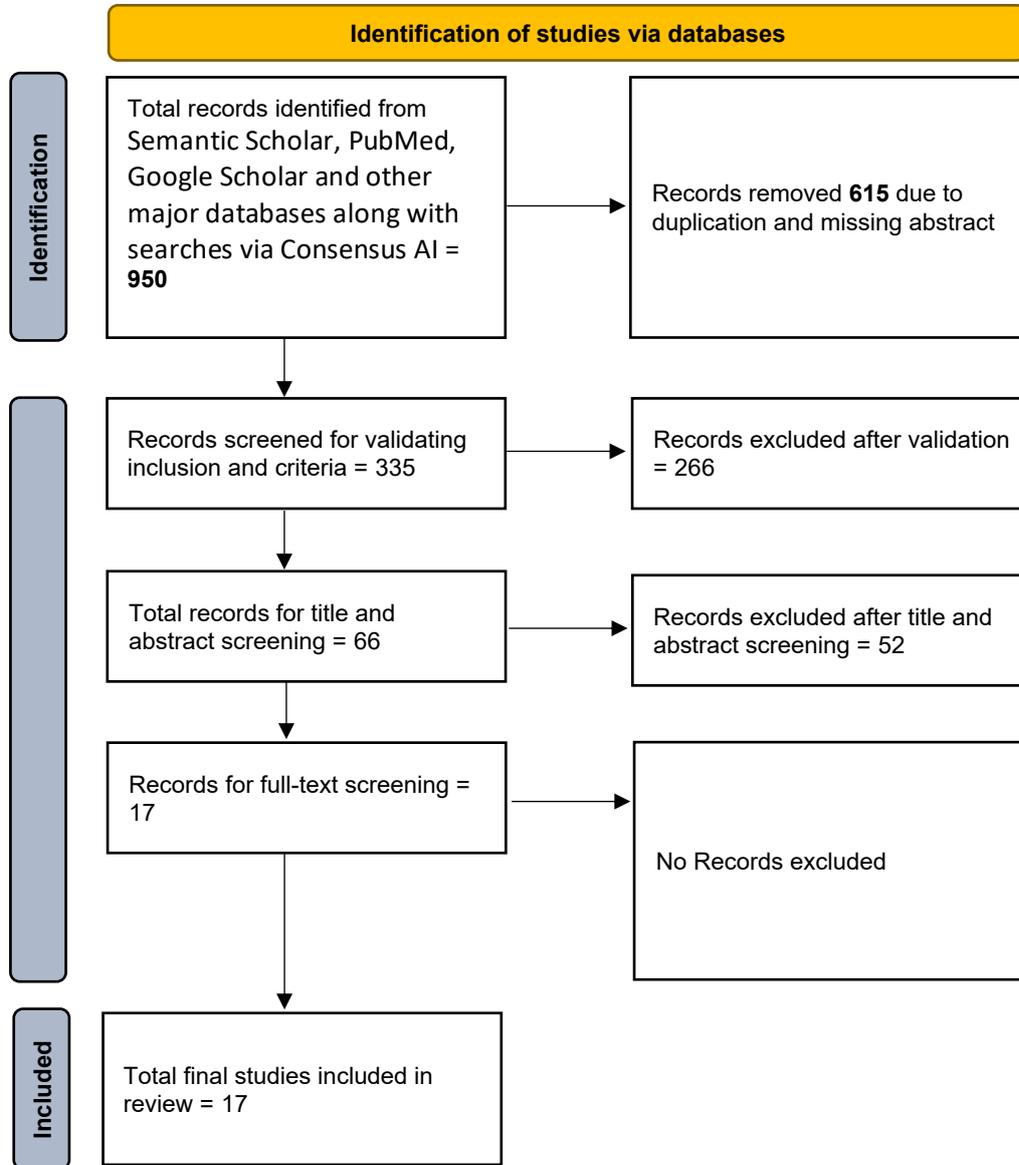


Figure 1: PRISMA flow diagram

A structured data extraction table was used to collect the following information from each included study (1) author(s) and year of publication, (2) social media platform(s) examined, (3) description of slang terms or features studies, (4) aims, objectives, and research questions, (5) methodological approach, and (6) key findings. Studies were grouped and analyzed based on (1) themes such as lexical innovation, cultural references, or pragmatic functions, (2) social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, (3) research method such as qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-methods approaches. The synthesis aimed to map research trends, identify recurring topics, and pinpoint underexplored areas, without performing a formal quality appraisal of included studies.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this systematic literature review are presented in three distinct sections, each directly addressing one of the research questions formulated in the introduction. Each section

provides a structured synthesis of relevant studies, highlighting patterns, thematic trends, and notable gaps in the literature, thereby offering a comprehensive response to the corresponding research question.

### RQ 1: What are the types and characteristics of Indonesian Gen Z slang on social media?

Despite its rapid growth in usage, slang continues to generate debate among scholars regarding its precise and stable definition. To ensure a shared understanding between the authors and the readers, this section begins by clarifying key terms. The reviewed studies consistently adopt a linguistic approach to defining slang, differentiating it from standard language in both morphological and semantic dimensions. Morphologically, slang is marked by a deliberate deviation from conventional word-formation rules. Semantically, it extends beyond the mere renaming of objects, instead enriching, qualifying, and adding complexity to the meanings it conveys (Mattiello, 2008). Accordingly, the types and characteristics examined in this research question encompass the diverse morphological processes through which Indonesian Gen Z constructs slang in their online communication, as well as the linguistic features underlying these word-formation processes.

Indonesian Generation Z frequently employs both patterned and non-patterned abbreviations – 24 and 30 types, respectively – as well as acronyms, comprising 8 patterned and 7 non-patterned forms, in their social media communication (Budiasa, 2021; Rahmah & Khasanah, 2023; Supri & Nur, 2021). In addition to slang, their internet-mediated discourse incorporates acrolect (high-register language), vulgar expressions, colloquialisms, jargon, and *ken*, a local term denoting particular speech styles (Kusyairi, Hikmah, et al., 2024). Slang formation is driven by creative linguistic strategies, including clipping, imitation, and novel word creation, reflecting a high degree of innovation among youth (Budiasa, 2021; Supri & Nur, 2021). One prominent trend, *Indoglish*; the mixing of Indonesian and English – has gained popularity, especially in urban centers such as South Jakarta, where it is often perceived as prestigious (Wijaya & Bram, 2021). Non-standard lexical items and hypercorrections, such as *ga* for *tidak* (“no/not”) and *yg* for *yang* (“which/who”), are also prevalent in digital communication (Widiyanto et al., 2020).

Phonological modification (Supri & Nur, 2021) and morphological processes; such as clipping, blending, and backformation, serve as key mechanisms in the creation of new slang terms (Kusyairi, Hikmah, et al., 2024; Supri & Nur, 2021). However, the widespread adoption of slang among teenagers has been associated with a decline in the use of standard Indonesian, creating potential challenges for both communication and learning (Barus et al., 2023; Siregar et al., 2024; Widiyanto et al., 2020; Yuliana, 2022). Furthermore, excessive reliance on slang may pose a risk to the authenticity and national identity embedded in the Indonesian language (Barus et al., 2023; Hadiapurwa et al., 2023; Rahmah & Khasanah, 2023). The table below presents a synthesis of the general findings from the reviewed studies, accompanied by illustrative examples of data extracted directly from the respective articles.

Table 2: A synthesis of the general findings

Slang Type/ Language Feature	Linguistic Process	Example(s)	Perceived Impact	Source(s)
<b>Abbreviations (Patterned and non-patterned)</b>	Morphological shortening	<b>Patterned:</b> YTTA ( <i>yang tau tau aja</i> ), YPPA ( <i>yang paham paham aja</i> ) <b>Non-patterned:</b> YGY ( <i>ya guys ya</i> ), A6 ( <i>asik</i> )	Increases speed and informality in communication	(Budiasa, 2021; Rahmah & Khasanah, 2023; Supri & Nur, 2021)
<b>Acronyms (Patterned and non-patterned)</b>	Initialism / abbreviation	<b>Patterned:</b> <i>Sasiper (sana sini caper)</i> , <i>Sasimo (sana sini mao)</i> <b>Non-patterned:</b> <i>Gamon (gagal move on)</i> , <i>Gabrut (galau brutal)</i>	Efficient but reduces formality	(Budiasa, 2021; Supri & Nur, 2021)
<b>Acrolect (High-level language)</b>	Lexical register choice	<i>Gua</i> , <i>Bokap</i>	Signals prestige in certain contexts	(Kusyairi, Hikmah, et al., 2024)

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<b>Vulgarity &amp; Colloquial Expressions</b>	Semantic shift / informal register	<i>Bjirr, Cok, bang, dok</i>	Enhances peer bonding, may reduce formality	(Kusyairi, Hikmah, et al., 2024)
<b>Jargon</b>	Specialized vocabulary	PoV, fyp	Strengthens in-group identity	(Kusyairi, Hikmah, et al., 2024)
<b>Ken (Local speech style)</b>	Regional lexical variation	<i>Tap tap layar, spill</i>	Preserves local identity	(Kusyairi, Hikmah, et al., 2024)
<b>Slang via Clipping, Imitation, Fresh Word Creation</b>	Morphological innovation	<i>Bro, brow, vroh, Sis, sista</i> <i>Hqq, bosque, gasss</i> <i>Skuy, santuy, unfaedah</i>	High creativity and identity signaling	(Budiasa, 2021; Supri & Nur, 2021)
<b>Indoglish (Indonesian-English mix)</b>	Code-mixing	So, which/ which is, literally, prefer	Prestige, urban identity marker	(Wijaya & Bram, 2021)
<b>Non-standard Words &amp; Hypercorrections</b>	Orthographic simplification	<i>ijin, smoga, faham</i>	Informality, potential erosion of standard norms	(Widiyanto et al., 2020)
<b>Phonological Modification</b>	Sound change	<i>anjing, anjrit, anjis, anjir, anjim, anjay, and njir</i>	Linguistic playfulness, novelty creation	(Supri & Nur, 2021)
<b>Morphological Processes (Clipping, Blending, Backformation)</b>	Morphological derivation	<i>Gaje (Gak Jelas)</i> <i>Sabi (bisa)</i>	Expands slang lexicon	(Kusyairi, Nisa, et al., 2024; Supri & Nur, 2021)
<b>General Slang Use</b>	Multiple processes	<i>Sasiga (sana siri gamon), Gamon (gagal move on)</i>	Decline in standard Indonesian, potential threat to authenticity and national identity	(Barus et al., 2023; Hadiapurwa et al., 2023; Rahmah & Khasanah, 2023; Siregar et al., 2024; Widiyanto et al., 2020; Yuliana, 2022)

Slang serves as a key linguistic resource for Indonesian Gen Z to express identity and strengthen peer connections, particularly on social media platforms (Anasti et al., 2020; Budiasa, 2021; Kusyairi, Hikmah, et al., 2024; Supri & Nur, 2021). While slang is valued for its role in fostering solidarity, it exists alongside the ongoing need for the preservation and proper use of the Indonesian language. Gen Z demonstrates adaptive language practices, adjusting slang use according to context and audience. In informal, peer-to-peer interactions – such as WhatsApp groups, social media chats, or casual online discussions; slang facilitates intimacy, initiates relaxed conversations, conveys impressions, and reinforces group identity. Conversely, in formal or professional contexts, there is a deliberate shift toward standard Indonesian, with slang usage minimized or avoided (Siregar et al., 2024; Yusuf et al., 2023; Zulkhaeriyah et al., 2023).

The intensity of slang use often increases during casual or social events, including in-person gatherings, online hangouts, and conversations on trending topics. During formal events, academic discussions, or professional meetings, Gen Z tends to switch to more formal registers, illustrating sophisticated code-switching abilities tailored to the communicative situation (Kandiawan, 2022; Siregar et al., 2024; Zulkhaeriyah et al., 2023). Slang is also a tool for fostering closeness, solidarity, and belonging in group chats and informal online communities (Kusyairi, Nisa, et al., 2024; Yusuf et al., 2023; Zulkhaeriyah et al., 2023). It enables the expression of emotions, humor, and creativity, while signaling group membership and generational identity, particularly in relaxed or playful settings communities (Kusyairi, Nisa, et al., 2024; Yusuf et al., 2023; Zulkhaeriyah et al., 2023). Furthermore, Gen Z often alternates between slang, standard Indonesian, and even English or regional dialects, depending on communicative goals and social context (Abbas et al., 2025; Kandiawan, 2022; Zulkhaeriyah et al., 2023). The table below summarizes the key functions of slang identified in the reviewed studies on Generation Z, highlighting their contexts of use, linguistic characteristics, and associated impacts.

Table 3: The functions of slang

Function of Slang	Context of Use	Linguistic Behavior	Perceived Impact	Source(s)
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<b>Identity Expression</b>	Social media, online chats, peer groups	Use of slang terms unique to Gen Z culture	Reinforces generational identity and distinctiveness	(Anasti et al., 2020; Budiasa, 2021; Kusyairi, Hikmah, et al., 2024; Supri & Nur, 2021)
<b>Peer Connection &amp; Solidarity</b>	Group chats, informal gatherings, online communities	Slang as bonding tool and shared code	Fosters closeness, belonging, and shared humor	(Kusyairi, Nisa, et al., 2024; Yusuf et al., 2023)
<b>Context-Based Language Adaptation</b>	Informal vs. formal settings	Increased slang in casual settings; reduced in formal contexts	Demonstrates linguistic adaptability and situational awareness	(Siregar et al., 2024; Yusuf et al., 2023; Zulkhaeriyah et al., 2023)
<b>Conversational Ease &amp; Intimacy</b>	WhatsApp groups, relaxed discussions	Casual and expressive slang	Lowers conversational barriers, promotes informal interaction	(Siregar et al., 2024; Yusuf et al., 2023)
<b>Event-Specific Intensification</b>	Casual events, trending topic discussions	Surge in slang usage during relaxed or social occasions	Aligns with social atmosphere and shared engagement	(Kandiawan, 2022; Siregar et al., 2024; Zulkhaeriyah et al., 2023)
<b>Code-Switching</b>	Academic/professional contexts vs. casual settings	Switching between slang, standard Indonesian, English, and dialects	Maintains appropriateness while preserving identity	(Abbas et al., 2025; Kandiawan, 2022; Zulkhaeriyah et al., 2023)
<b>Emotional &amp; Creative Expression</b>	Informal online and offline settings	Playful, humorous, and innovative slang	Enhances expressiveness and creativity in communication	(Kusyairi, Nisa, et al., 2024; Yusuf et al., 2023; Zulkhaeriyah et al., 2023)
<b>Language Preservation Awareness</b>	Formal contexts, professional interactions	Reduction or avoidance of slang	Supports preservation of standard Indonesian	(Siregar et al., 2024; Yusuf et al., 2023)

In sum, the findings of this review indicate that Indonesian Generation Z demonstrates both creativity and adaptability in their use of slang, particularly in digital and peer-oriented environments. Slang functions as a tool for identity construction, social bonding, and creative expression, yet its prevalence also raises concerns about the preservation of standard Indonesian. The strategic adjustment of language across contexts; marked by a balance between informal slang and formal registers, underscores Gen Z's linguistic agility and social awareness. These patterns highlight the dual role of slang as both a vibrant cultural asset and a potential challenge to linguistic standardization, inviting further inquiry into its long-term impact on language development and national identity.

### **RQ 2: Which social media platforms and communication contexts have been the primary focus of these studies?)**

Indonesian Gen Z slang is highly dynamic and creative, exhibiting notable variation across different social media platforms. While many slang forms are widely shared, each platform cultivates its own trends, stylistic preferences, and popular expressions, shaped by its technical features and the characteristics of its user community. The table below presents platform-specific slang trends observed among Indonesian Gen Z.

Table 4: Platform-specific slang trends

Platform	Slang Characteristics & Usage Patterns	Papers
TikTok	Frequent use of fresh, creative expressions, relaxed language, abbreviations, and imitative words. Slang is often shaped by viral trends, challenges, and influencer content. Used for casual greetings, expressing feelings, and building familiarity with followers.	(Syafaah & Haryanto, 2024) (Abbas et al., 2025; Syafaah & Haryanto, 2024) (Zulkhaeriyah et al., 2023)
WhatsApp	Slang is used to create intimacy and relaxed conversation in group chats. Includes fresh/creative words, acronyms, clippings,	(Yusuf et al., 2023) (Abbas et al., 2025)

	and imitative forms. Focuses on building closeness among friends.	
Instagram/YouTube	Slang spreads rapidly through influencers and content creators (“celebgrams,” YouTubers). The language is highly creative, with a mix of acronyms, flippant, and clipped words.	(Budiasa, 2021) (Abbas et al., 2025)
Twitter	Slang is concise, often using abbreviations and contractions due to character limits. Trends can spread quickly and become widely adopted.	(Abbas et al., 2025) (Budiasa, 2021)

The dominant user demographics and content formats of each platform – whether video-based, chat-oriented, or post-driven; strongly influence the emergence and diffusion of slang (Abbas et al., 2025; Budiasa, 2021; Syafaah & Haryanto, 2024; Yusuf et al., 2023). Influencers and viral content further accelerate the popularity of specific terms within each platform’s ecosystem (Budiasa, 2021; Syafaah & Haryanto, 2024). For instance, platforms centered on private group chats, such as WhatsApp, tend to foster more intimate and relational slang, whereas public-facing platforms like TikTok and Instagram promote trend-driven, performative slang aligned with viral challenges and short-form content culture (Abbas et al., 2025; Budiasa, 2021; Syafaah & Haryanto, 2024; Yusuf et al., 2023).

Overall, Indonesian Gen Z slang is far from uniform across social media. Instead, each platform cultivates distinctive slang trends shaped by interaction styles, technical affordances, and viral culture. This diversity illustrates both the adaptability and the creative linguistic agency of Gen Z in digital communication environments.

### **RQ 3: What research methods have been employed in existing studies on Indonesian Gen Z slang in social media contexts?**

This review synthesized findings from 17 qualitative studies published between 2020 to 2025, all of which documented the diverse forms of slang and the creative linguistic processes underlying their use among Indonesian Generation Z. Across the studies, self-identity construction and peer connection consistently emerged as the primary functions of slang, with several works also highlighting secondary functions such as humor, trend alignment, and code-switching. All studies adopted a literature-based approach, employing documentation as the primary data collection technique and thematic analysis for data interpretation. The majority of data sources were drawn from social media, with platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, WhatsApp, Twitter (X), and YouTube appearing most frequently. Geographically, the research predominantly focused on urban Indonesian youth, with some studies noting regional lexical variations. A quality appraisal indicated that the reviewed studies demonstrated methodological transparency in outlining data sources and analytic procedures, although the depth of linguistic analysis varied. Collectively, these methodological patterns underscore the central role of digital communication in shaping and disseminating contemporary Indonesian slang.

### **RQ4: What key gaps and underexplored areas can be identified from the existing literature?**

Despite a growing body of research on the usage and formation of slang, notable gaps remain in empirical investigations concerning its long-term educational and cultural impacts, regional variations in use, and the effectiveness of interventions aimed at balancing slang adoption with standard language proficiency. The table below presents a matrix of these identified research gaps.

Table 5: Matrix of the identified research gaps

Thematic Area	Findings from reviewed studies	Identified gaps	Potential future research
<b>Educational Impact</b>	Slang is linked to reduced use of standard Indonesian in formal contexts (Barus et al., 2023; Siregar et al., 2024).	Lack of longitudinal studies on slang’s impact on literacy, academic performance, and language acquisition.	Conduct long-term cohort studies on language proficiency; test interventions integrating slang awareness in language education.

<b>Cultural Impact &amp; Identity</b>	Slang fosters youth identity, social bonding, and creativity (Anasti et al., 2020; Kusyairi, Nisa, et al., 2024).	Limited exploration of the balance between slang use and preservation of national linguistic identity.	Ethnographic studies on intergenerational perceptions; policy-oriented research on language preservation strategies.
<b>Regional Variations</b>	Some studies note urban-centered slang trends, such as <i>Indoglish</i> in South Jakarta (Wijaya & Bram, 2021).	Lack of comparative research on slang across rural vs. urban areas, and among different ethnic/regional groups.	Comparative sociolinguistic mapping of slang across Indonesia's regions.
<b>Platform-Specific Trends</b>	Each social media platform fosters distinct slang forms influenced by user demographics and features (Abbas et al., 2025; Syafaah & Haryanto, 2024).	Limited examination of how platform affordances influence slang evolution over time.	Longitudinal digital ethnography on slang emergence and decline on specific platforms.
<b>Intervention &amp; Policy</b>	Some concerns raised about excessive slang use threatening standard language (Hadiapurwa et al., 2023).	No empirical evaluation of language policy interventions or public campaigns addressing slang use.	Pilot and assess language awareness programs in schools and online communities.

Addressing these gaps will not only deepen the understanding of slang as a sociolinguistic phenomenon but also inform balanced strategies for fostering linguistic creativity while safeguarding the integrity of the Indonesian language.

## CONCLUSIONS

This systematic literature review advances the understanding of Indonesian Gen Z slang by synthesizing fragmented scholarship into a coherent body of knowledge. Addressing the four research questions, the review identifies the linguistic forms and characteristics of slang, the platforms and contexts where it thrives, the methodological approaches applied, and the gaps that remain underexplored. Through systematic mapping of types, characteristics, contexts, and methodological patterns, it highlights not only the linguistic creativity and adaptability of Gen Z but also the sociocultural forces shaping their digital communication. By identifying critical research gaps; particularly in longitudinal impacts, regional variation, and intervention strategies, this review sets a targeted agenda for future inquiry. The synthesis presented here contributes to both sociolinguistic theory and applied language policy, offering evidence-based insights for educators, policymakers, and researchers seeking to foster linguistic innovation while safeguarding the integrity and vitality of the Indonesian language in the digital era.

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