

Research Article

# The Phenomenon of Political Communication in the Era of Social Media Towards Public Polarization After the 2024 Presidential Election in Indonesia

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## ABSTRACT

This research examines the impact of social media on political communication and public polarization. Social media, initially designed to foster social interactions, has become a political arena, leading to conflicts of interest through controversial campaign content for the 2024 presidential election. The study focuses on the emergence of public division into camps supporting each candidate, such as Anis-Muhaimin, Prabowo-Gibran, and Ganjar-Mahfud. Each candidate has different narrative content themes, such as change movements, Jokowi's program, and Indonesia's excellence. This unique phenomenon continues until the inauguration of the elected president. Tensions between the losing and winning camps continue on social media timelines. The research uses a netnographic method with a qualitative approach. Social media enables rapid and extensive political communication, but concerns have arisen about ethical communication violations committed by its users. Content displayed by candidates or their success teams can create an echo chamber, reinforcing voters' views. The emergence of consultants, influencers, and political buzzers further exacerbates this issue, fostering division among societal groups.

**Keywords:** Political Communication; Social Media; 2024 Presidential Election; Public Polarization

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Along with the rapid growth of information technology, the phenomenon of political communication in the social media era is increasingly relevant. Social media has changed the way political actors or successful teams interact with the public. In this context, social media not only functions as a tool for conveying information, but also functions as a platform for building relationships and gaining support from the public (Ayu Nenden Assyfa Putri, 2021). The development of modern communication technology brings challenges and opportunities for politicians. They must be able to utilize social media effectively to attract public attention and build a positive image. For example, social media allows politicians to convey their messages quickly and effectively, and reach a wider audience than traditional media. But utilizing social media also brings dangers. Poor management can cause divisions in community groups (Vera Dwi Lestari, 2024).

Social media such as X (Twitter) and TikTok in the 2024 Presidential Election appear to be more focused on issues that cause negative sentiment and encourage polarization. During the campaign period, the public still does not receive adequate information about the candidates' programs. The narrative battle is stronger on trivial, non-substantial issues. Campaign content on social media does not provide adequate enlightenment, gimmicks are more effective in embracing voters. Hate speech and fake news always dominate the timeline (Siti Khopipah, 2024). However, this phenomenon adds to its own problems. The emergence of consultants, influencers, and political buzzers complicates political messages on social media. In general, they play a role in manipulating public opinion and influencing the results of political campaigns through social media. Political buzzers are commonly used to create political issues, lead public opinion, and raise the prestige and image of certain individuals or groups. In this process, they often use social media to spread information that can trigger disputes. When information is disseminated through social media with a tendency to strengthen existing beliefs, this polarization occurs. This will create an echo chamber where people are only exposed to information that is in line with their beliefs. In situations like this, it is very important to understand how social media functions as a communication tool that influences public opinion in addition to spreading information (Sukma Alam, 2021).

During the 2024 Indonesian presidential election, political campaigns on social media have become a major phenomenon that has influenced the way voters get information and interact with candidates and campaign teams. According to We Are Social data in early 2023, around 167 million users or around 60.4% of the total population in Indonesia have ridden the trend in using social media. A Kompas survey of 1,200 respondents in 38 provinces, May 2023, showed that 42.3% of respondents often accessed social media to obtain political information, such as presidential candidate news. Then followed by television 41.1%, online media 9%, and radio 2% (kompas.com, 2024). With a lot of content packed emotionally and visually, public polarization in the 2024 presidential election process seems increasingly real. Other studies show that provocative content often gets more attention, causing divisions between groups of people. This shows that although social media can be used for political education, if not used properly, they can also worsen polarization (Yudhi Andoni, 2024). Even though it has passed, the phenomenon of the 2024 Presidential Election campaign continues to attract public attention to this day. This is because traces of black campaigns are still recorded, always being spread to bring down their opponents and influence public opinion. According to Public Opinion in Political Polarization on Social-Media, political polarization occurs when society is divided into two different groups due to issues, policies or ideologies. In Indonesian politics, this is a new phenomenon. One group considers its views and principles to be the most correct, and the opposing group considers its political views and morality to be wrong (Inke Nur Dewanti, 2022).

This sharp polarization intensity phenomenon emerged in 2 candidates vs 1 candidate for the 2024 Presidential Election. The level of societal division occurred as a result of political competition between the candidates. In the context of the 2024 Presidential Election, it was found that polarization increased in 2 pairs vs 1 pair of presidential and vice presidential-candidates. The community was divided into two large groups based on their support for Candidate Pair number 1 (Anies Baswedan and Muhaimin Iskandar) x Candidate Pair number 3 (Ganjar Pranowo and Mahfud MD) vs Candidate Pair number 2 (Prabowo Subianto and Gibran Rakabuming Raka). This polarization is marked by the emergence of a narrative spread in society about dynasty politics related to the 2024 presidential election yesterday, where Jokowi seemed to force his son Gibran to become a vice-presidential candidate accompanying Prabowo. On social media, this movement is very active in discussions until now. Thus, this study aims to explore how narrative content on social media can cause public polarization after the 2024 Presidential Election and it is also very important for politicians and the public to increase critical media literacy, as well as develop the ability to distinguish between valid information and hoaxes

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research method will use the netnography method with a qualitative approach. Where the author uses it to understand interactions and cultures in cyberspace. This method allows researchers to observe and participate in online communities for a certain period of time so that they can find patterns of behavior and social relationships (Inke Nur Dewanti, 2022). Qualitative research relies on qualitative data and detailed and dense descriptions as a result of in-depth data collection. Three methods can be used to collect in netnography, namely online observation, documentation, and literature review. Online observation is used by researchers to observe interactions and communications on social media platforms such as TikTok and X (formerly Twitter) related to issues and narratives of content raised in the 2024 Presidential Election process which are suspected of causing public polarization to date. Documentation collects content produced by users, such as posts, comments, and discussions on social media from political content that has caused public polarization after the 2024 Presidential Election. Then added with a literature review to analyze previous research to understand the cultural and social context of the target being studied (Suhaeri, 2023).

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The phenomenon of political communication in the era of social media towards public polarization during the 2024 Presidential Election process shows the strength of each supporter towards each candidate they like. In general, public polarization can have an impact on the election results because supporters of the candidate they like will become more active voters and thus get more votes. The 2024 Presidential Election yesterday produced three main candidates for the presidential election, namely candidate pair number one Anies Baswedan and Muhaimin Iskandar, candidate pair number two Prabowo Subianto and Gibran Rakabuming, and candidate pair number three Ganjar Pranowo and M. Mahfud MD. The 2024 presidential election in Indonesia showed strong public polarization even though the fight was between three

candidates. Various methods were used by the three candidate pairs' successful teams to influence voter opinion through social media. According to the APJII survey, collected from dataindoensia.id, the number of internet users in Indonesia will increase by 2.67% from 210.03 million in 2022-2023. According to the We Are Social report, the number of Indonesian internet users will reach 213 million by early 2023. This increase shows great potential to reach a wider audience through the use of internet technology (Yudhi Andhoni, 2024).

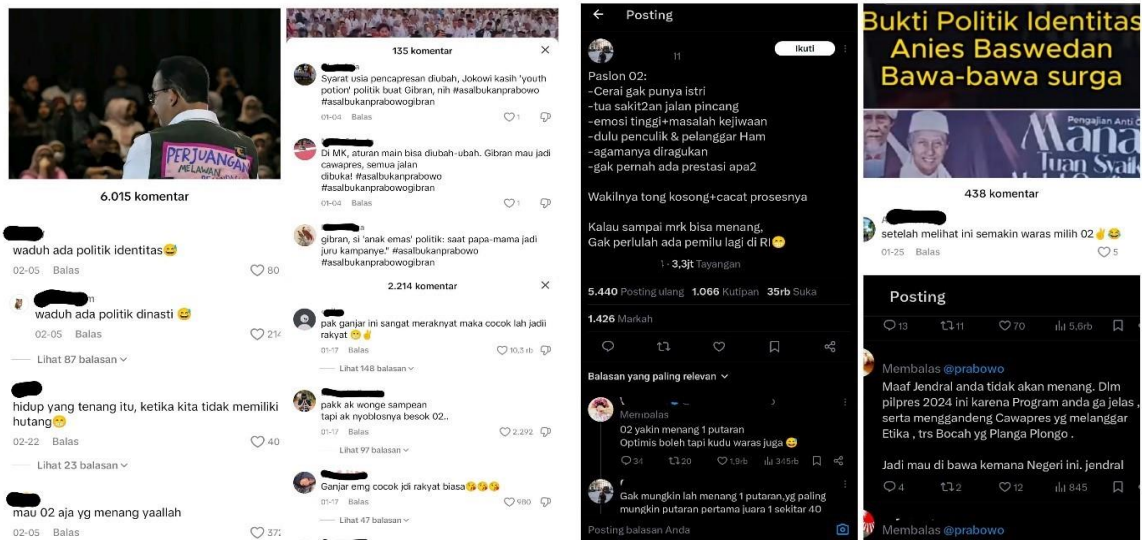
The data that was successfully found stated how influential it is to involve internet users in influencing public votes. Because the digital society as it is today is the source of most voters who can be reached with a tool called social media. According to previous analysis, the narrative pattern related to the 2024 presidential election appears similar to the 2019 presidential election, especially on social media. Bad political practices will create public polarization, and this is very worrying because social media timelines display a lot of inaccurate information, disinformation, and even hoaxes that encourage oligarchic politics. The election of presidential candidates should be seen as a good, fair and enjoyable democratic event where different opinions must be respected, trusted, and accepted (Inke Nur Dewanti, 2022).

Kompas Research and Development, which has conducted a survey on the situation in Indonesia during the 2024 presidential election process, many respondents were found to think that buzzers/Influencers could be the cause of increasingly heated public polarization. Of the Kompas Research and Development respondents, 21.6% of the spread of information that is not guaranteed to have sources and contains provocative messages or can be called hoax news can make the polarization of society even sharper. 13.4% of national figures are less able to resolve disputes that occur in community groups (Suhaeri, 2023). Examples of hoaxes on social media include false claims about certain candidates or political parties such as fake news or fabricated information that often appeared during the 2024 presidential election campaign to damage the reputation of opponents or influence voter perceptions of certain candidates.

This phenomenon is a real example of the spread of hoaxes about political candidates who claim to be involved in corruption scandals or certain immoral behavior. Although it has no strong basis, this propaganda information spreads quickly on social media and raises doubts or even hatred towards certain candidates. At the beginning of the 2024 presidential campaign, political buzzers also appeared on social media, both praising the presidential and vice-presidential candidates and bringing down their reputation with black campaigns. A buzzer is someone who uses a fake account to spread the message they want to convey anonymously. In political communication in the era of social media, buzzers are usually given instructions about the narrative of the content to suit the wishes of the payer. In addition, a buzzer can also be someone whose voice is heard and trusted by others, making others influenced by the narrative of his content (Elisa Winata, 2024).

The intensity of sharp polarization occurred between two candidates vs one candidate for the 2024 Presidential Election. The level of societal division occurred as a result of political competition between the three candidates. In the context of the 2024 Presidential Election, it was found that polarization increased between two pairs of presidential and vice-presidential candidates vs one pair of presidential and vice presidential candidates. The community was divided into two large groups based on their support for Candidate Pair number 1 (Anies Baswedan and Muhaimin Iskandar) x Candidate Pair number 3 (Ganjar Pranowo and Mahfud MD) vs Candidate Pair number 2 (Prabowo Subianto and Gibran Rakabuming Raka). This phenomenon emerged due to allegations of dynasty politics carried out by candidate pair number 2, Vice President Gibran Rakabuming was known to have successfully passed the nomination after changing the new rules to replace the age limit for nomination. This dynasty politics was also sharpened by the presence of Gibran's uncle who served as chairman of the KPU, thus facilitating the process.

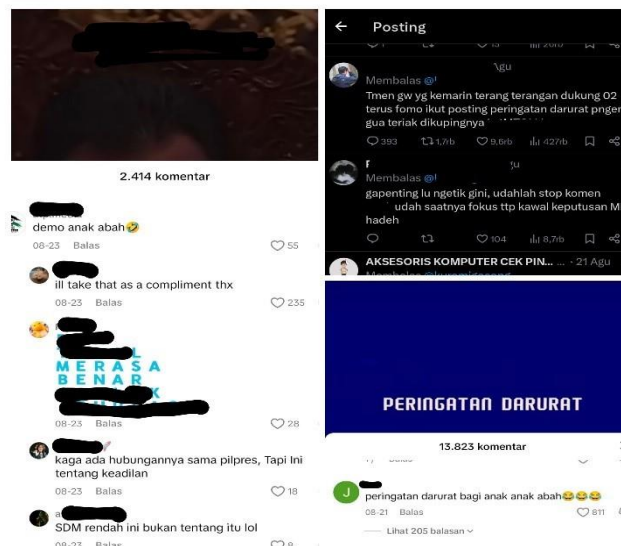
Issues regarding dynasty politics continue to be fought by camps 01 and 03 with various narrative content that is directed at camp 02. Echoing the terms of continuity and 1 round for candidate pair 02 makes the two opposing camps seem to lead public opinion to raise various narratives that bring down the prestige of Prabowo and Gibran.



**Figure 1.** Digital footprint of public polarization of the 2024 Presidential Election. Image. 2 Digital traces of public polarization of the 2024 Presidential Election platform X (Twitter) and TikTok platform

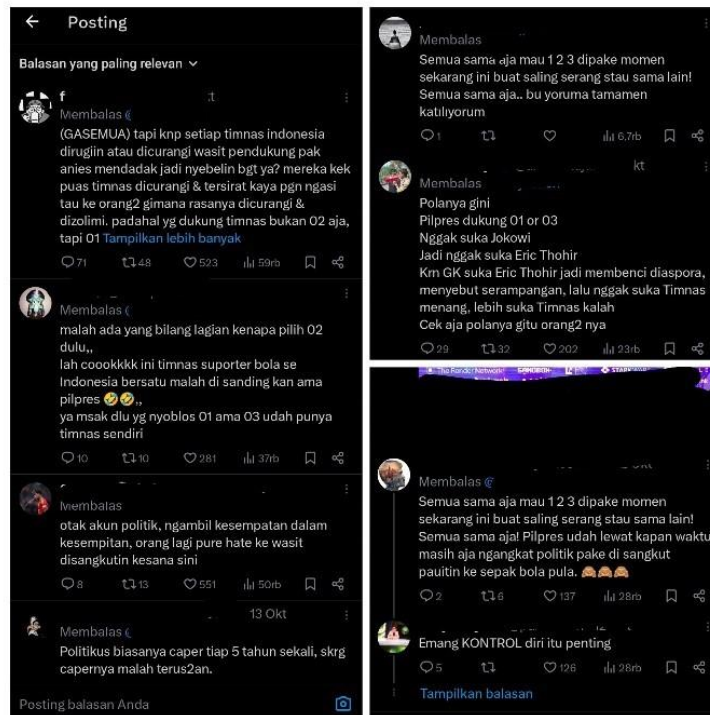
The community is divided into two groups, those who agree with the continuation of Jokowi's program and those from the opposition who want change to happen. What is unique is that the narrative battle on social media seems to pit the 02 vs 01, 03 camps, which are also known to agree with change, but in fact, social media is full of terms about anak abah for supporters of change and kaum oke gas for supporters of continuity. The passage of time from the 2024 presidential election campaign to the election of the president and vice president continues the phenomenon of polarization in society. Until the inauguration of the Prabowo-Gibran pair, the social media timeline did not subside about various issues that divided society.

For example, the phenomenon that has been popular lately about "Emergency Warning" and "Indonesia vs Bahrain referee fraud". The author also uses these two trending topics as material for how political communication in the social media era has a long-term impact on public polarization. Although this division in society could occur before the 2024 presidential election or during the campaign process, it turns out that until today we know together that the narrative of provocative content between camps continues to be popular in cyberspace. Starting from the viral "Emergency Warning" which recently flooded the social media timelines of Indonesian netizens, it proves that the polarization caused by the battle of narrative content for the 2024 presidential election campaign continues to this day. "Emergency warning" is content in which a community's resistance to the central government wants to change a rule that is already in effect in order to benefit a person or a certain group.



**Figure 2.** Digital traces of public polarization after the 2024 Presidential Election

This resistance was not only carried out through social media, the community also took to the streets by coming to the DPR building to cancel the plan that was very clearly giving benefits to someone. However, the demonstration and resistance to the narrative on social media again caused polarization which was suspected to be related to the 2024 Presidential Election. There are some people who consider the "emergency warning" narrative to be a conflict raised by the losing camp in the 2024 Presidential Election. The second public polarization after the 2024 Presidential Election was found in the realm of football, it is known that the Indonesian National Football Team is currently on the rise after many naturalized players began to join the Garuda squad. Yesterday, social media was abuzz with the issue of the referee who led Indonesia vs Bahrain in the 3rd round of the World Cup qualifiers. Many people did not accept the Indonesian national team being cheated by the referee's leadership. Various narratives of content regarding referee cheating continue to spread on the timelines of various social media platforms.



**Figure 3.** Digital traces of public polarization after the 2024 Presidential Election

However, this phenomenon is again associated with the 2024 Presidential Election, there are several narrative opponents who claim that supporters of the Indonesian national team are supporters of the elected government. As a society, they also seem to dislike the development of the Indonesian national team because the general chairman of PSSI is considered to come from a camp that is at odds with them. This phenomenon is very unfortunate because it occurs due to the continuation of the polarization in the 2024 Presidential Election. Until now, the public continues to pit the winning and losing camps against each other. This may continue to happen for a very long time after seeing that the public is still not calmed down by the 2024 Presidential Election problem, especially social media netizens.

Increasing media literacy is the best way to prevent something like this from happening again. This literacy can be used to see content analysis on social media and culture in reading, checking, and analyzing. General components such as the KPU, teachers, Bawaslu, and community leaders can do this. This media literacy can be applied from elementary school to college. An additional way is to disseminate positive content to the younger generation through public figures, buzzers, and influential important figures. Law enforcers can also work together to prevent public polarization (Inke Nur Dewanti, 2022). State institutions that have been formed such as Bawaslu and KPU can actually start the general election by working together with social media platform providers. This is done to monitor various provocative content from being easily spread to the public. After preventive measures are completed, firm action must be taken by deleting accounts that spread false information and cause conflict in society. Of course, blocking must be done by first selecting various social media accounts that actually spread divisive content that can endanger the integrity of the state. This filtering effort will certainly increase the public's enthusiasm to participate in a good democratic party in the future (Elisa Winata, 2024).

## 4. CONCLUSION

Based on the research on how political communication in the era of social media affects public polarization after the 2024 Presidential Election in Indonesia, it shows that the use of social media as a tool to spread tendentious campaigns or information can influence public opinion and the democratic process as a whole. This shows how important strict supervision and regulation of content posted on social media is to prevent data manipulation that can disrupt justice and democracy in general elections. In addition, digital and critical literacy are very important for the public to filter information received from social media to prevent the spread of information that is incorrect, misleading and contains provocative messages. According to the findings of this study, the advice that can be given by the author is that the government and related institutions must increase supervision of political content disseminated on social media. This needs to be done to avoid the spread of content narratives that can harm the public as voters as well as certain candidates or political parties. The government, related institutions, and various social media platforms, especially TikTok and X (Twitter) should work together to improve the system to handle content that violates the law and has the potential to harm the public. Plus, creating technology that can automatically detect and identify provocative content so that it can be removed from the platform before it spreads widely.

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