Dynamics of Political Communication in Identity and Diversity Issues in Indonesia: A Study of the 2024 Presidential Election of the Republic of Indonesia

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Abstract. The 2024 Presidential Election of the Republic of Indonesia is an important event to study the dynamics of political communication, especially related to identity and diversity issues. This study aims to explore how candidates and political parties use these issues in their communication strategies, as well as analyze their impact on public perception and social polarization. Using a qualitative method with critical discourse analysis, this study analyzes campaign speeches, political advertisements, and activities on social media. The findings show that identity issues, such as religion, ethnicity, and regional origin, are often used to strengthen support for certain groups, both through exclusive and inclusive narratives. The explicit use of identity issues in political campaigns can rally support, but it can also increase tensions between groups, fuel polarization, and intensify 'us versus them' feelings in society. Social media doubles as a tool to spread political messages that reinforce stereotypes or promote unity. As a result, society becomes more ideologically divided, with a tendency to increase intolerance. Therefore, this study emphasizes the importance of ethics in political communication and the need for a more inclusive and responsible approach to political campaigns. Stricter regulations on the dissemination of information on social media and efforts to promote inclusive dialogue are urgently needed to maintain social cohesion in the midst of diversity. This study shows that the issue of identity and diversity has a great impact on social polarization through social media.

Keywords: Political Communication, Identity and Religion Issues, 2024 Presidential Election

1   Introduction

Political communication is a key component of the democratic process, which includes the various ways in which political information is conveyed to the public, including through mass media, campaigns, and public speeches. In a pluralistic country like Indonesia, with its vast cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity, the issue of identity is often a central element in political campaigns. These identity issues can include ethnicity, religion, language, and regional origin, all of which can affect political and social dynamics.

The 2024 Presidential Election in Indonesia is a relevant context to explore how issues of identity and diversity are used in political communication strategies. Previous studies, such as those conducted by Aspinal revealed that identity issues have long been part of electoral politics in Indonesia, often manipulated for electoral gain.[1] This can be seen in the 2014 and 2019 elections, where religious and ethnic narratives were used by various candidates to gain voters' sympathy. This research also refers to Mudde's work which shows that the politicization of identity can strengthen populism and divide society. [2]

In addition, research by Muhtadi shows that social media has become a powerful tool in spreading political messages related to identity, which is often accompanied by misinformation or disinformation. [1] This is further strengthened by the study of Nugroho which found that social media accelerates the spread of identity discourse, both positive and negative, among young voters.

In this context, this research focuses on the 2024 Presidential Election to analyze how issues of identity and diversity are used in political communication. This research explores the communication strategies adopted by candidates and political parties, as well as their impact on public perception and social polarization. By utilizing a discourse analysis approach, this research will identify the key themes that emerge in campaign speeches, political advertising, and social media interactions. In addition, this study will also look at how the use

of identity issues affects social dynamics in Indonesia, including its effects on social cohesion and political stability.

The ultimate goal of this research is to provide recommendations in order to create more inclusive and ethical political communication, as well as reduce the potential for polarization and social tensions. With this approach, it is hoped that this research can contribute to the development of a more responsible and beneficial political communication strategy for the democratic process in Indonesia.

2 Method

This study uses a qualitative method with a discourse analysis approach. Data was collected from a variety of sources, including campaign speeches, political ads, and interactions on social media during the 2024 Presidential Election campaign period. [3] The analysis was carried out to identify the main themes related to identity and diversity that emerge in political communication. In addition, Posts, videos, and interactions on social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram that are related to the candidate's campaign. Articles published by mass media that discuss the use of identity issues in political campaigns.

3 Results and Discussion

a. Dynamics of Identity Politics in the 2024 Presidential Election

The dynamics of identity politics in the 2024 Presidential Election highlight how identity issues are used to manipulate public perception and influence the electoral process. By using identity issues to build support or discredit opponents, political campaigns have the potential to deepen social polarization and create tensions in society. The study also explores the communication strategies implemented by candidates and political parties during the 2024 Presidential Election in Indonesia, with an emphasis on how identity and diversity issues are used to influence public perception and their impact on social polarization. In the context of Indonesia's highly pluralistic politics, identity issues that include elements such as religion, ethnicity, language, and regional origin are often central elements in political communication strategies. Candidates and political parties use these issues to build emotional connections with voters as well as consolidate support from certain groups.

These identity-based communication strategies often involve the use of cultural symbols, rhetoric that emphasizes differences, and campaigns designed to strengthen ties with groups that share similar identities.[4] For example, in the 2024 Presidential Election of the Republic of Indonesia, the issue of identity has become a very powerful political tool, with various narratives that affect public perception. One striking example is the case of Anies Baswedan, who became one of the victims of the politicization of identity issues. Anies Baswedan, who is a former Governor of DKI Jakarta and a presidential candidate, faces significant challenges related to his ethnic background.

During the campaign, Anies Baswedan was often attacked with a narrative that stated that he was not a "Javanese" who is the dominant ethnic group in Indonesia. This narrative claims that, because Anies is not from Java, which is traditionally considered the center of political and cultural power in Indonesia, he is considered unfit to be president. This issue not only refers to ethnic differences, but also relates them to political legitimacy and leadership capacity.

These attacks take advantage of the ethnic beliefs and stereotypes that exist in Indonesia, where ethnic Javanese are often considered a more influential group in politics and government. In this case, the issue of identity is used to disseminate doubts about Anies Baswedan's eligibility as a presidential candidate, postulating that his ethnic background may hinder his ability to lead the entire nation.

This narrative shows how the issue of identity can be used to divide and distract from substantial political and policy agendas. [5] In Anies' case, the attack was not only about his ethnic background but also about spreading uncertainty and discomfort among voters who might feel more comfortable with candidates who were perceived as more 'Javanese' or more representative of the dominant ethnic group.

Social media plays a crucial role in disseminating these narratives, accelerating the dissemination of information and amplifying its impact.[6] Messages linking Anies Baswedan's ethnic background with his unsuitability for the presidency have gone viral on various platforms, triggering debate and deepening polarization among voters.

During the 2024 presidential election process of the Republic of Indonesia, identity issues also play an important role in political communication strategies, one of which can be seen in the narrative that attacks Prabowo Subianto, a presidential candidate who is also the former Commander of the Special Forces Command

(Kopassus) and Minister of Defense. In recent months, Prabowo has been the target of attacks that have questioned his credibility as a Muslim, particularly through claims that he cannot be a prayer imam.

This narrative claims that Prabowo Subianto is not fit to lead as president because he does not have the ability or qualifications to be a good Muslim, including not being able to be a prayer imam. This attack uses a very specific measure of religiosity to assess the feasibility of Prabowo's leadership, which in this case is the ability to lead prayers as an imam. This claim leverages religious norms in Indonesia society to influence public perceptions of Prabowo's character and personality.

The issue was promoted with the aim of tarnishing Prabowo's credibility in the eyes of Muslim voters, arguing that a president must have the appropriate religious qualifications and demonstrate compliance in daily worship practices.[7] In this context, the attack serves to create doubt and distrust among voters who prioritize the religious aspect in choosing their leaders.

This attack not only focuses on Prabowo's personal aspects but also shows how issues of identity and religiosity can be used to strengthen political narratives. Social media has played an important role in disseminating this information, with messages about Prabowo's inability to be a prayer imam spreading widely and quickly on various platforms. This has had a significant impact in changing public perception of Prabowo, exacerbating polarization and tensions among voters.

This case illustrates how identity politics can be used to discredit candidates by attacking certain aspects of their personal identity. Using the issue of religiosity as a tool of attack, this narrative seeks to cast doubt and distract from other substantive aspects of Prabowo's programs and policies. It also emphasizes the importance of a more substance- and policy-focused approach to political communication, as well as the need to pay attention to the impact of identity politicization on social cohesion and political stability.

Ganjar Pranowo, a presidential candidate from the PDI-P, who also received attention related to the airing of the Maghrib adhan video in his campaign advertisement broadcast by MNC Group. Ganjar Pranowo, who was then the Governor of Central Java, faced sharp criticism after a campaign advertising video showing the atmosphere of the Maghrib call to prayer appeared on television screens. The video, which was broadcast by MNC Group, shows the Maghrib call to prayer as part of a visual narrative to strengthen Ganjar's image as a figure close to Muslims and sensitive to religious values. The advertising is seen by many as a form of explicit identity politics campaign, using religious symbols to attract support from Muslim voters.

Criticism of this advertisement focuses on the allegation that Ganjar is manipulating religious symbols for political purposes.[8] In this context, the Maghrib adhan, a call for night prayers that has a deep meaning in the religious life of Muslims, is used to build Ganjar's religious image, which can strengthen his appeal among Muslim voters. The viewing of this video is seen as a strategy to associate Ganjar with deep religious concern and build an emotional connection with a group of voters who attach great importance to the religious aspect of choosing their leader.

Meanwhile, MNC Group as one of the major media that broadcast this video also received attention related to their role in disseminating an identity campaign. The video is considered to reinforce identity politics by utilizing religious symbols in the commercial context of political campaigns, which in turn can deepen polarization in society. In many cases, the use of religious symbols in political advertising can be controversial and spark debate about ethical limits in political campaigns, as well as their impact on social cohesion and the integrity of democratic processes.

Many candidates from certain religious majority groups use religious symbols in their campaigns to show their proximity to the religious values of their voters. [9] In the face of diversity, some candidates apply an inclusive approach in their political communication, emphasizing the narrative of unity and social harmony. [10] This approach aims to attract support from various groups by highlighting shared values and promoting social cohesion. However, although this inclusive approach is designed to reduce division, its impact in practice is often muffled by the dominance of more polarizing narratives. Research by Nugroho shows that social media, which often prioritizes provocative and polarizing content, accelerates the spread of identity discourse, both positive and negative. As such, inclusive messages from candidates are often drowned under a great stream of narratives that reinforce differences.

The impact of this communication strategy on public perception and social polarization is significant. [11] The use of exclusive identity narratives often reinforces feelings of separation between social groups, which can trigger tension and conflict. For example, in some cases, speeches or advertisements emphasizing differences in identity have led to riots or tensions in certain communities. Social media, as a platform that allows for the rapid and widespread dissemination of messages, exacerbates this phenomenon by spreading narratives that can deepen polarization. In many cases, information that emphasizes identity differences goes

viral, altering social dynamics to become more segregated and increasing the risk of conflict between groups.(Butar Butar & Fithrah Ali, 2018)

On the other hand, an inclusive communication strategy has the potential to reduce polarization if it is well received by the public, but it is often faced with challenges in breaking through the dominance of polarizing narratives. [12]

b. Visual Image of the Candidates in the 2024 Presidential Election

In the 2024 Presidential Election of the Republic of Indonesia, the dynamics of identity politics is one of the main themes that affect the strategy and public perception of presidential candidates. An analysis of political themes from four pairs of presidential candidates, Anies Baswedan and Muhaimin Iskandar (Cak Imin), Prabowo Subianto and Gibran Rakabuming Raka, as well as Ganjar Pranowo and Mahfud MD, shows how identity issues are used strategically in political campaigns.

Anies Baswedan and Muhaimin Iskandar (Cak Imin) emphasized the theme of pluralism and social equality. Anies, who is known for his academic background and experience as Governor of DKI Jakarta, carries a narrative based on diversity and inclusivity. Their campaigns focus on creating a just and equitable society, as well as an emphasis on unity in diversity. Cak Imin, as a figure from the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) circle, strengthens this theme with an emphasis on moderate Islamic values. However, attacks on Anies related to ethnic and religious backgrounds, such as claims that he does not adequately represent the dominant group, pose its own challenges. This criticism reflects how identity issues can be used to test a candidate's credibility, while their coalition's efforts to unite various groups are often faced with internal differences and diverse interests.

Figure 1. Anies Baswedan & Muhaimin Iskandar

Anies Baswedan, the presidential candidate of the Change coalition, attracted the public's attention with a consistent choice of dress style, especially by often wearing white clothes. These choices not only reflect personal preferences but are also part of a careful political communication strategy to shape the campaign's image and message. The white shirt, in this context, serves as a powerful and diverse symbol. White is often associated with cleanliness, simplicity, and openness, which can reinforce Anies' image as a presidential candidate who is clean of corruption and committed to transparency. In Indonesia's politics, where issues of corruption and integrity are often the main concerns, using white can serve to emphasize the message of commitment to clean and ethical governance.

In addition, white clothes also have a deep religious connotation in Indonesia culture. In the context of Islam, white is often considered a symbol of purity and closeness to religious values. By often wearing white shirts, Anies may be seeking to strengthen emotional and religious ties with Muslim voters, presenting himself as a candidate who not only understands but also appreciates religious values. Anies' choice to wear a white shirt can also be seen as an effort to differentiate himself from other candidates. In a highly competitive campaign, every element of a presidential candidate's public appearance is important to build an image and convey the desired message. By choosing white, Anies can create a consistent and easily recognizable impression in the eyes of the public, as well as communicate a simple but powerful visual message.

However, this choice of dress style has not escaped criticism either. Some may see the use of white as an attempt to create an image that is too clean or even to cover up shortcomings in programs and policies. This kind of criticism often arises in political campaigns where symbolism can be a target of debate. Overall, Anies Baswedan's decision to often wear white shirts in the 2024 Presidential Election campaign is part of a broader

political communication strategy. This choice serves to convey a message about cleanliness, integrity, and proximity to religious values, while differentiating itself from other candidates. In the context of colorful and symbolistic politics, every detail, including the choice of clothing color, plays a crucial role in shaping the image and influencing public perception.

Prabowo Subianto and Gibran Rakabuming Raka carry the theme of nationalism and family continuity. Prabowo, known for his nationalist leadership style, has often emphasized the importance of national stability and strength. Gibran, the son of President Joko Widodo, added elements of continuity and government experience in this coalition. Their narrative seeks to blend military power and government experience with a symbol of continuity from the current government. However, Prabowo has faced criticism over his track record, including allegations of human rights abuses, while Gibran, as a vice presidential candidate, has faced accusations of nepotism. The display of the Maghrib adhan video in Ganjar Pranowo's advertisement also highlights how identity politics can be used to reinforce or criticize religious symbols, adding complexity to Prabowo and Gibran's political communication strategies.

Figure 2. Prabowo Subianto & Gibran Rakbuming Raka

Prabowo Subianto and Gibran Rakabuming Raka, highlighted the choice of costumes that consistently use blue. This choice of color not only reflects personal style preferences, but is also part of a planned political communication strategy, aiming to convey a specific message to voters. The color blue, in the context of politics and design, is often associated with a variety of positive qualities such as stability, trust, and professionalism. In this campaign, the use of blue by Prabowo and Gibran serves to build a solid and reliable image. Blue, as a color often associated with serenity and credibility, aims to reinforce the public perception that the pair is a stable and experienced choice, suitable for leading Indonesia in a challenging period.

In addition, the color blue also has a deep political connotation in the context of Indonesia. In many cases, blue is seen as a color that is often associated with power and influence, reflecting a commitment to assertive and purposeful leadership. By adopting this color, Prabowo and Gibran strive to strengthen their image as leaders who are able to provide certainty and a clear direction in government. In the visual context of a campaign, blue helps create consistency and a strong identity. This option allows the candidates to appear with a coordinated and easily recognizable appearance by voters. It also makes it easier to create campaign materials, such as television ads, posters, and banners, all of which use the same color scheme. This color consistency helps build a cohesive brand image and reinforce the visual message of their campaigns.

However, as with any political communication strategy, the use of blue can also be faced with criticism. Some may argue that focusing on color and visual imagery can distract from substance and policy. In situations where criticism of color selection may arise, it is important for candidates to ensure that their color strategy is supported by clear and relevant programs and policies. Overall, Prabowo Subianto and Gibran Rakabuming Raka's choice to use blue in their costumes during the 2024 Presidential Election campaign is part of a broader political communication strategy. The color blue serves to convey a message of stability, trust, and professionalism, as well as to build a strong and consistent visual identity. In the highly competitive world of politics, every element, including the choice of clothing color, plays an important role in shaping the image and influencing the public's perception of the candidate.

Ganjar Pranowo and Mahfud MD carry the theme of reform and inclusive leadership. Ganjar, who served as Governor of Central Java, highlighted a reformist and populist approach in the campaign, focusing on change, transparency, and law enforcement. Mahfud MD, former Chief Justice of the Constitutional Court,

added elements of law and justice in this coalition. They seek to blend the reform agenda with an inclusive narrative, emphasizing the importance of clean governance and fair rule of law. However, Ganjar also faced criticism related to the management of identity issues in the campaign, including the Maghrib call to prayer video broadcast by MNC Group. The video is considered an exploitation of religious symbols for political gain, potentially exacerbating polarization and social tensions.

Figure 3. Ganjar Pranowo and Mahfud MD

Ganjar Pranowo and Mahfud MD, who often wear a combination of black and white, are a significant strategic element in their campaigns. This choice of color not only reflects a personal aesthetic but also serves to communicate certain messages to voters and shape the public image of the couple. Black and white have a strong connotation in the world of politics and visual communication. The color black is often associated with power, seriousness, and authority. Meanwhile, white symbolizes simplicity, cleanliness, and transparency. The combination of these two colors creates a striking contrast and gives a strong impression, affirming the message of decisive leadership and integrity.

Ganjar Pranowo, known for his reformist and populist approach, along with Mahfud MD, who has a background in law and justice, chose black and white to highlight their image as a serious partner and committed to a clean and effective government. These color choices emphasize the impression of professionalism and maturity, as well as building the perception that they are candidates ready to face the big challenge with rigour and clarity. Black and white also have a strong visual effect in political campaigns. In the context of advertising and campaign material, this combination creates a clean and elegant design, which can help deliver the message clearly and effectively. The consistent appearance of these colors also serves to build a coherent visual identity, making it easier for voters to recognize and remember these pairs in the midst of the bustle of the campaign.

Besides, this color selection can also be seen as a strategy to distinguish Ganjar and Mahfud from other candidates. In a highly competitive campaign, the choice of colors and clothing styles is part of an effort to create a different and more prominent image in the public eye. Black and white colors, with classic and elegant impressions, can give a strong impact and make them look more authoritative and reliable. However, as with any element of campaign strategy, this color selection can also face criticism. Some may argue that the colours black and white, although strong, may seem too formal or less attractive to a particular electorate segment that prefers a brighter and more dynamic approach. Therefore, it is important for Ganjar and Mahfud to ensure that their messages and policies remain the main focus of the campaign, with visual designs that support but do not divert attention from the substance.

Overall, the choice of Ganjar Pranowo and Mahfud MD to wear black and white clothes in the 2024 presidential campaign is part of the planned communication strategy. This combination of colors conveys a message of strength, professionalism, and integrity, as well as helping to build a coherent and strong image in the public eye. In a political world full of symbolism and competition, every detail, including the choice of clothing colors, plays an important role in shaping perceptions and influencing election results. The 2024 presidential election in Indonesia highlights how identity issues are used strategically to shape candidate imagery, attract support from a particular group, and influence public perception. Each candidate pair has a different approach to managing identity issues, facing challenges and controversies that affect political dynamics and election outcomes. This dynamic reflects the political complexity of identity in Indonesia, where identity symbols are often used to political goals while also having an impact on social cohesion and democratic stability.

4 Conclusion

This research provides a comprehensive understanding of how issues of identity and diversity affect political communication strategies in the 2024 Indonesian presidential election. Through qualitative analysis and critical discourse, the study explores ways in which candidates and political parties integrate identity issues such as religion, ethnicity, and regional origin—in their campaigns to build an image and gain support.

Research findings show that the use of identity issues in political campaigns often serves to strengthen the support of a particular group by leveraging an exclusive or inclusive narrative. This approach, although effective in attracting the attention and support of specific electorate segments, also potentially increases tensions between groups and exacerbates social polarization. In this context, the issue of identity is not only a tool for political mobilization but also a source of conflict that can deepen divisions in society. Social media plays a dual role in this process. On the one hand, the platform serves as a means to spread the message.

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