

A CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE ON POLITICAL COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT IN INDONESIAN DEMOCRACY IN THE 2024 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

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Abstract

Political communication is an important element in the democratic process, especially in the Presidential Election (Pilpres). However, political communication practices in Indonesia are often characterized by various problems. This research aims to analyze the political communication management used by presidential candidates and their campaign teams in the 2024 presidential election. This research uses qualitative research methods. The data collection technique in this research is literature study. The data that has been collected is then analyzed in three stages, namely data reduction, data presentation and drawing conclusions. The research results show that in the 2024 presidential election, presidential candidates and their campaign teams used various political communication management strategies to influence public opinion and win the election. They utilize mass media, social media, and campaign events with voters to spread campaign messages and build a positive image. Personal branding techniques and story narratives are used to create emotional closeness with voters and strengthen the candidate's political identity. In addition, candidates also use influencers and influential supporters to increase the candidate's visibility and popularity. All these efforts are designed to win public support and ensure victory in the presidential election.

Keywords: *Communication, Politics, Presidential Election.*

A. INTRODUCTION

Political communication is the process of conveying messages that occurs while six other functions are being implemented: political socialization and recruitment, interest articulation, interest aggregation, regulation creation, regulation implementation, and regulation adjudication. This means that the function of political communication is inherently present in every function of the political system (Sulthan et al., 2023). Political communication is crucial for conveying the aims and objectives of the democratization process (Huntington, S., 1991). Through political communication, we can communicate political messages and objectives and engage political actors. Effective and accurate political communication can influence the public's perspective on the information and objectives conveyed (Cindy et al., 2024).

Social media and online platforms are increasingly prominent in political communication. These technologies enable faster and broader dissemination of information and provide opportunities for the public to actively participate in political discussions. However, challenges such as misinformation and disinformation also need to be addressed to maintain the integrity of political communication. Overall, political communication is not only a tool for conveying information, but also a means to shape public opinion, mobilize the masses, and create social and political change. Political communication is not only a tool for conveying information, but also a means of shaping public opinion, mobilizing the masses, and creating social and political change. Effective political communication can increase political awareness and participation among the public, as well as foster constructive dialogue and

debate. Thus, political communication plays a crucial role in building and maintaining a healthy and well-functioning democracy.

Political communication is a crucial element in the democratic process, particularly in presidential elections (Pilpres). Presidential elections can be viewed from a political communication perspective. From this perspective, there are three main aspects: first, the theory of popular will, which states that the candidate with the most votes will win; second, the theory of popular support, which illustrates that the people give support to their chosen candidate pair; and third, social control, which means that elections and presidential elections should be seen as a way for the people to control their political choices (UIN, 2024).

Political communication plays a crucial role in conveying the vision, mission, and work programs of candidates to the public. Through campaigns, debates, and various other forms of communication, candidates seek to convince voters of their ability to lead and bring about positive change. Furthermore, political communication helps create transparency and accountability in the election process, enabling voters to make more informed decisions based on accurate data. Overall, political communication serves not only as a means of conveying information but also as a mechanism that supports active public participation in the democratic process, strengthens the legitimacy of election results, and ensures that elections are conducted fairly and honestly.

Political communication in presidential elections also encompasses several other aspects, such as campaign strategy, media use, and voter mobilization. Candidates and their campaign teams must be able to effectively convey their vision, mission, and work programs to voters. The use of mass media and social media is crucial for reaching a broader and more diverse audience and for shaping public opinion. In this context, political communication serves as a bridge between candidates and voters, enabling dialogue and the exchange of information. At the same time, political communication in presidential elections also plays a crucial role in reducing polarization and increasing social cohesion. Inclusive and non-divisive campaigns can help strengthen a sense of unity within the community. Furthermore, transparent and honest communication can increase public trust in the democratic process and election results. Thus, political communication contributes to the legitimacy of the elected government.

On the other hand, challenges such as fake news, propaganda, and information manipulation can disrupt healthy political communication processes. Therefore, it is crucial to have effective oversight and regulatory mechanisms in place to ensure that information disseminated during the presidential election is accurate and trustworthy. Voter education on the importance of verifying information is also a crucial aspect in addressing these challenges. Overall, political communication is not merely a tool for winning the presidential election, but also a means to educate and empower voters, build political legitimacy, and strengthen the democratic process as a whole. Effective and ethical political communication is the foundation of a healthy and sustainable democracy.

Media and political exposure must seriously consider the various types of media coverage a candidate may receive – not all public relations (PR) is good PR. To evaluate the overall impact of media on electoral politics, it must be compared with other relevant sources of information accessible to voters (Langsæther et al., 2019). However, political communication practices in Indonesia, especially during the presidential election, are often marred by various problems. Some of these include the spread of hoaxes, negative campaigns, and hate speech, which undermine the quality of democracy. Furthermore, the lack of transparency and accountability in information dissemination is also a challenge. This situation can lead to confusion and distrust among voters, which can ultimately influence election results.

Previous research by (Rizky et al., 2023) found that social media has a significant influence on politicians' political communication, particularly in building a positive public

image. For example, senior and retired politician Prabowo Subianto uses social media to channel his political communication. However, social media is not always beneficial for all parties, as it can spread hoaxes or fake news about the 2024 Indonesian presidential candidate, Prabowo Subianto. Netizens easily search for, process, and validate hoax news or hate speech against Prabowo Subianto.

The spread of this false information can damage a candidate's reputation and image and disrupt a healthy democratic process. In this context, it is crucial for the public to have good digital literacy skills to distinguish between true and misleading information. Furthermore, social media platforms also need to take steps to address the spread of hoaxes and hate speech, for example through stricter content moderation policies and the use of technology to detect false information. Thus, social media can be an effective tool in supporting transparent and accountable political communication, while protecting the integrity of the election process from detrimental interference.

Another study by (Azmie et al., 2022) found that social media is crucial in political life, especially in the lead-up to the 2024 Presidential Election. Social media acts as a link between the public and political elites. Anies Baswedan utilized this opportunity to increase his electability as a presidential candidate in 2024. He garnered and maintained support by actively posting various activities on his personal social media accounts.

The novelty of this research lies in its focus: the political communication management used by presidential candidates and their campaign teams in the 2024 Presidential Election, a method previously unstudied. This research can enrich the literature on political communication management with a critical perspective, emphasizing the importance of transparency, participation, and fairness in political communication. This can serve as a basis for developing new, more comprehensive theories within the context of Indonesian democracy. This study aims to analyze the political communication management used by presidential candidates and their campaign teams in the 2024 Presidential Election.

B. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research method. Qualitative research emphasizes analysis and description. In this research process, the subject's perspective is the primary focus, while the researcher uses theory as a guide to ensure the research aligns with the facts found in the field. The purpose of qualitative research is to provide an in-depth explanation of a phenomenon by collecting detailed data (Fadli, 2021). The data collection technique in this study was a literature review obtained from Google Scholar. The collected data was then analyzed in three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The researcher interpreted the presented data to produce meaningful findings and provide a deeper understanding of the phenomenon being studied. The results of this interpretation were then compared with existing theories to test the suitability between the findings in the field and the theory used. Thus, this study not only provides a detailed description of the phenomenon being studied but also provides a significant theoretical contribution.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The digital era has brought significant changes in political communication. Previously predominantly conducted conventionally through print media, television, and radio, it has now evolved rapidly with the advent of social media. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube allow politicians, political parties, and the public to interact directly and instantly. Social media not only serves as a channel for conveying campaign messages and work programs but also provides a space for the public to freely express their opinions, criticism, and support (Haris, 2022). This provides a new dimension to political participation, where every individual has the opportunity to engage in political discussions and influence

public opinion. Furthermore, transparency and openness of information have increased because every political development can be monitored and responded to in real time by the wider public (Qudsi & Syamtar, 2020).

Digital media has become a crucial platform providing a space for communication, political participation, and interaction between various important elements of society. Through digital media, the public can easily access the latest political information, discuss political issues, and express their opinions directly to leaders and potential leaders. Platforms such as social media, blogs, and online news sites enable more interactive and dynamic dialogue between citizens, politicians, and civil society organizations. This not only increases transparency and accountability but also encourages active citizen participation in the democratic process. Digital media also facilitates collaboration between various interest groups, facilitates mobilization of support, and strengthens advocacy for specific issues. Thus, digital media plays a crucial role in enriching the political landscape by giving voice to more individuals and groups and supporting more inclusive and participatory interactions (Hia & Siahaan, 2021).

Political communication plays a crucial role in the sustainability of democracy and the formation of effective public policy. Through political communication, information on important issues, policies, and political views can be conveyed to the public, enabling them to make better and more informed decisions (Jackson, K., & Pye, L., 1978). Furthermore, effective political communication helps foster transparency and accountability among public officials, as leaders must explain and be accountable for their actions and decisions to their constituents (Dewi, 2023). Political communication serves as a bridge between the government and citizens, enabling constructive two-way dialogue. It provides opportunities for the public to voice their opinions and concerns, thus making the resulting policies more responsive to public needs (Albornoz, L., 2015). In today's digital era, political communication also encompasses the use of social media and online platforms to reach a broader and more diverse audience, strengthening political participation and enriching public discourse (Kustiawan et al., 2022).

Majid (2023) emphasizes that the political communication strategies implemented by presidential candidates are not static but constantly adapt to the dynamics and developments of ongoing political trends. Political trends are understood as observable patterns of change in the political landscape over a specific period, reflecting shifts in voter preferences, the evolution of candidate and political party communication strategies, and the strategic issues that dominate public discourse. In the context of the digital era, these trends are increasingly influenced by the rapid flow of information, interactions on social media, and real-time public responses, requiring candidates to be more adaptive, responsive, and strategic in formulating political messages to remain relevant to the needs, aspirations, and political sensitivities of the public.

Indirect communication effects refer to the impacts that arise as a consequence of the political communication process, which are not always recognized by the public. In the context of presidential elections, political communication conducted by presidential candidates through various forms of campaigning plays a crucial role in shaping public perceptions, attitudes, and political preferences. Support for presidential candidates is not solely born from rational considerations but is also influenced by symbolic messages, narratives, and images continuously constructed through political communication. This process operates latently, where individuals can be influenced without realizing that their political choices are the result of exposure to repeated and structured communication messages (Syarbaini, 2021).

One prominent political communication strategy in the contemporary context is the use of social media, particularly YouTube, as the primary medium for presidential and vice-presidential candidate campaigns. YouTube allows for the delivery of political messages in a more narrative, personal, and emotional audio-visual format, making it effective in reaching

Generation Z and Millennials, the dominant voter groups. Through content such as vlogs, speeches, campaign advertisements, and documentation of daily activities, presidential and vice-presidential candidates can build emotional closeness and an authentic image in the eyes of young voters. This creatively and informally packaged persuasive approach strengthens the effect of indirect communication, as political messages are delivered through entertainment and storytelling, making them more easily accepted and internalized by the audience without creating excessive resistance.

Digital media not only provides a communication platform but is also used for political communication during campaigns. Platforms such as social media, blogs, and online news sites enable candidates and political parties to convey their visions, missions, and programs directly to the public (Hasfi, 2019). Through digital media, information can be disseminated quickly and widely, reaching various levels of society. Furthermore, digital media enables two-way interaction between politicians and voters, allowing politicians to be more responsive to public aspirations and concerns (Johnson et al., 2024). Therefore, digital media plays a crucial role in political communication strategies, helping to build imagery and garner support more effectively during campaigns. Political communication plays a crucial role in election campaigns, where a sound communication strategy can influence voter perceptions and election outcomes (Tasrif, 2023). An effective campaign can articulate a candidate's vision and mission, build a positive image, and garner broad support. Therefore, mastering good political communication is key to gaining public trust and building government legitimacy (Vowe, G., & Henn, P., 2016).

Election campaigns are one of the strategies used by participants to influence public choice. They involve elements of political communication and require regulations that support the enforcement of election principles, including legal certainty and justice (Bartley, R., Chee, C., Huntington, S., & Ogata, S., 1993). This principle is realized through regulations governing election campaigns on social media. From the perspective of election organizers, election campaigns are activities by participants or parties appointed by participants to convince voters by offering their vision, mission, programs, and/or self-image. These campaigns are also part of political education that must be carried out responsibly and simultaneously for the presidential and vice-presidential election campaigns, as well as for members of the House of Representatives (DPR), Regional Representatives Council (DPD), and Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) (Khopipah, 2024).

Similar to previous elections, political elites, according to their groups, are increasingly increasing the quantity and quality of their political communication with their community base. The intensive development of political communication with the public is solely aimed at enhancing public image and achieving high electability. The 2024 Indonesian presidential and vice-presidential election was held on February 14, 2024. The election results show the total votes for each presidential and vice-presidential candidate pair, as follows (General Elections Commission Decree No. 360 of 2024, 2024):

Table 1. Data on Vote Acquisition for Presidential and Vice-Presidential Candidate Pairs

Serial No.	Names of the Presidential and Vice-Presidential Candidate Pairs	Vote Acquisition	Percentage (%)
1.	H. Anies Rasyid Baswedan, Ph.D. - Dr. (H.C.) H. A. Muhaimin Iskandar	40,971,906	24.95
2.	H. Prabowo Subianto - Gibran Rakabuming Raka	96,214,691	58.59
3.	H. Ganjar Pranowo, S.H., M.I.P. - Prof. Dr. H. M. Mahfud MD	27,040,878	16.46
Total		164,227,475	100



Figure 1: Presidential Candidates in the 2024 Election

Of the three presidential candidates in the 2024 election, Ganjar Pranowo and Anies Baswedan appear to be more effective in utilizing the YouTube platform as a political communication tool to build their image, increase visibility, and connect with the wider public. Ganjar Pranowo has a personal YouTube account with approximately 2.37 million followers, while Anies Baswedan has approximately 673,000. This difference in follower count not only reflects their level of digital popularity but also demonstrates each candidate's commitment to utilizing YouTube as a strategic political campaign platform. Given that Generation Z and Millennials constitute the majority of voters, candidates are required to adapt their narratives, issues, and political communication styles to the preferences and issues that are relevant and of current concern to these age groups.

The video content featured on Ganjar Pranowo's YouTube channel demonstrates efforts to build a personal brand as a leader who is approachable and connected to the everyday lives of the people. This aligns with his political slogan, "My Lord is the People, Position is Just a Mandate," which implicitly represents the values of participatory democracy—of the people, by the people, and for the people. Ganjar's visual narratives tend to focus on social issues, such as poverty, welfare, and grassroots problems, thus reinforcing his empathetic and populist image. In contrast, Anies Baswedan's YouTube content reflects more of an academic and intellectual identity, with videos dominated by educational, reflective, and motivational themes, and an emphasis on education and human resource development. These differences in strategy demonstrate the segmentation of political messages tailored to the audiences each candidate seeks to reach.

Unlike the two presidential candidates, Prabowo Subianto does not have a personal YouTube account as his primary platform for his digital campaign in the run-up to the 2024 election. Prabowo's exposure on YouTube is primarily achieved through media coverage and viral content circulating in the digital public sphere, including the "gemoy" image popular among Generation Z and Millennials. This strategy demonstrates a greater reliance on mainstream media than independent management of social media channels. Nevertheless, all three presidential candidates have Instagram accounts with relatively large followings—Anies has around 6.7 million followers, Prabowo has 8.9 million, and Ganjar has 6.6 million. However, in terms of intensity and consistency of use, Anies Baswedan and Ganjar Pranowo appear more active in regularly sharing campaign content through their Instagram feeds and stories, including displaying support from various groups, including politicians, public figures, and civil society. In contrast, campaign activity on Prabowo Subianto's Instagram account is relatively limited and not regularly displayed, indicating significant differences in the candidates' digital political communication strategies.

In general, political communication management in Indonesian democracy during the 2024 Presidential Election highlights various aspects that influence election dynamics and the

interaction between political actors and the public. In a developing democracy, political communication management serves not only as a tool for conveying messages but also as a strategy for shaping public opinion and gaining support (Kaid, L., 2004). The main criticisms that have emerged concern the transparency and accountability of political communication, where information manipulation and propaganda often occur, which can obscure facts and unethically influence voter choices (Le, K., & Nguyen, M., 2021). Furthermore, the role of social media in the spread of false information and hate speech is a major challenge that must be addressed (Koeswara, et al., 2013). This critical perspective also emphasizes the importance of media literacy and public political awareness to become intelligent and critical voters. Political communication management in the 2024 Presidential Election needs to be directed at strengthening the integrity of the democratic process, ensuring access to accurate and balanced information, and encouraging more substantive public participation in the political process.

The political communication management employed by presidential candidates and their campaign teams in the 2024 Presidential Election is a combination of careful and targeted communication strategies to build a positive image, attract support, and influence public opinion. Candidates and their campaign teams utilize various media, both traditional and digital, to convey their messages and visions. Social media plays a crucial role by enabling direct interaction with voters and the viral distribution of content. Campaign teams also hold public events, debates, and door-to-door campaigns to strengthen engagement with the community (Dahl, R., 2006). The presence of influencers and supporters helps increase the visibility and popularity of candidates in the 2024 Election. Influencers with large social media followings can convey campaign messages more broadly and effectively, attracting audiences that may not be reached by traditional campaign methods. They are able to shape public opinion and influence voter perceptions through relevant and engaging content (Peter & Muth, 2023). Endorsements from public figures or well-known figures also add to the legitimacy and appeal of candidates, as their followers are more likely to trust and follow their recommendations. This collaboration between candidates and influencers creates a synergy that strengthens campaign messages, mobilizes support, and increases voter engagement, making social media a crucial arena in modern political contestation (Danendra et al., 2024).

The use of data analytics helps understand voter preferences and concerns, allowing campaign messages to be tailored to specific target audiences. Furthermore, issue and crisis management is carried out quickly and efficiently to maintain the candidate's reputation. Through this holistic approach, candidates and their campaigns strive to build a strong narrative and dominate public discourse, with the ultimate goal of winning the support of the majority of voters on election day. Thus, a critical perspective on political communication management in Indonesian democracy in the 2024 Presidential Election highlights the significant transformation from conventional communication methods to digital media. This digital medium enables direct interaction between politicians and the public, increasing transparency, accountability, and political participation. Influencers and influential figures are utilized to increase the visibility and popularity of candidates, help shape public opinion, and expand the reach of campaigns. Influencers wield significant influence over their followers and can be an effective tool for disseminating campaign messages more widely. The use of influencers can also add a personal and authentic touch to campaigns, making messages more relatable and engaging for audiences. Overall, the integration of digital technology in modern political communication not only changes the way campaigns are conducted but also strengthens democracy by increasing public engagement and participation.

D. CONCLUSION

The digital era has transformed the paradigm of political communication by expanding the role of social media as a key platform. Digital media not only increases political participation and information transparency but also facilitates direct interaction between politicians and the public. The strategic use of digital media, including collaboration with influencers and prominent figures, plays a crucial role in amplifying campaign messages and influencing public opinion in the context of the 2024 Presidential Election. However, challenges related to information manipulation and the spread of hate speech highlight the need for strict regulation and public awareness of media literacy to ensure the continued integrity of democracy.

In the 2024 Presidential Election, presidential candidates and their campaign teams adopted various meticulous political communication management strategies to influence public opinion and achieve electoral victory. They extensively utilized mass media, social media, and campaign events to convey campaign messages and build a positive image for their candidates. To achieve this goal, personal branding and storytelling techniques were employed to build emotional bonds with voters and strengthen the candidate's political identity. Furthermore, the presence of influencers and influential supporters was leveraged to increase the candidate's visibility and popularity. All of these strategies were carefully crafted to garner broad public support and ensure success in the democratic contest.

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