

Capturing Political Conversation: An Analysis of Public Response on Social Media during Indonesian Election

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Abstract

This research aims to analyze public responses through political conversations regarding the 2024 Indonesian presidential election process. Anies-Muhaimin, Prabowo-Gibran, and Ganjar Mahfud attended the presidential Election in Indonesia. This research analyzes public responses through virtual sphere theory, which originates from the public sphere. This research uses the Social Network Analysis (SNA) method to identify information from each candidate pair; the data collection process uses Drone Emprit data analysis, and data mining by Dore Emprit is filtered to display findings that are in accordance with the data needs in the research. The context in this analysis is the presidential-vice presidential Election in Indonesia by taking information in December-January. The results highlight that the virtual sphere was built through voluntary movements owned by the Anies-Muhaimin candidate pair to promote ideas about change and Anies-Muhaimin's experience in leading. Another couple used micro-influencers to shape opinions about Prabowo-Gibran and created a significant association despite a high negative sentiment. Ganjar-Mahfud is a presidential and vice-presidential candidate who promotes the public sphere through active use of Twitter social media by creating active communication with other users, thus becoming the main contributor to building an issue on social media Twitter.

Keywords

Political Conversation, Social Media, Election, Public Response, Indonesia

1. Introduction

The idea of the public sphere promoted by Jürgen Habermas has been widely

described by looking at how the public sphere is an “intersubjectively shared space” that produces ideas (Dahlberg, 2005); the public sphere is related to deliberative democracy, which provides space for the community to participate (Ackerly, 2006). Dahlberg (2005) states that in Habermas’ view, the public sphere emphasizes the importance of citizen debate, which can strengthen democracy. The public sphere proposed by Habermas is still relevant to current political issues. Therefore, Papacharissi (2002) calls it the virtual sphere, a transition that explains the form of physical space in the last few decades and becomes digital or virtual space. So, how does the virtual sphere intersect with Habermas’ public sphere? According to Papacharissi (2002), The public sphere can now be connected through technological media so that the essence of the public, which is referred to as physical and real space, shifts into virtual or digital space.

However, the nature of public space has not moved, so it is called a new public space; Loader & Mercea (2011) state that there are transitions and changes regarding the public sphere, initially known as the space of human life, where public opinion can be formed directly (Habermas, 2010) but is turned into a virtual space. Changes in public space are not much different from Habermas’ concept; some intermediaries create new public spaces through technology, and this space is called the virtual sphere (Papacharissi, 2020). Technological advances and the development of social theory encourage new views of the public sphere conception, according to Dahlberg (2005). There is a structural transformation of public space, which was initially dominated by a class system through ownership rights, now becoming a classless space (Gestrich, 2006). A classless space provides the opportunity for anyone to build public opinion, so technological advances have influenced the development of Habermas’s theory.

Democratic countries build these two concepts: the public sphere and the virtual sphere. In the modern era, people actively interact through the virtual sphere. Theoretically, Habermas considers it as part of building public opinion; in the view of Dahlberg (2005), strong democracy is accompanied by public participation through the creation of public opinion. In the view of sociologists such as John Stuart Mill and James Madison, changes in the public sphere created the liberal public sphere (Rowland, 2006); this assumption arises from the perspective of US liberal theory regarding current political representation. However, this view is not directly proportional to countries like Indonesia. Indonesia’s representation system is not a majority, so there is no primary actor who represents a particular group but rather the whole.

In the last three decades, after developing countries used the internet, new ways have been created for countries to interact through more open and deliberative democracy (Dahlgren, 2005). The study of social media and its functions has been popularized as a political process and new democratic space (Gilardi et al., 2022; Kruse et al., 2018; Price, 2013), creating a new political culture through uncertainty through information on social media (Shao & Wang, 2017), as a medium for political participation (Boulianne, 2015). Meanwhile, in terms of the idea of a public sphere, this study has not looked at how social media functions as a new

public sphere; several scholars have proposed this idea, but it is still not clear about it, such as social media as a public sphere (Mazali, 2011), or simply as a means of political communication (Cela, 2017). We want to draw a study position to discuss the virtual sphere idea proposed by (Milovanovic, 2021; Papacharissi, 2020) with social media functions by capturing interactions that occur on social media in the 2024 election.

However, we see that there is a tendency to capture digital democracy from countries with a dual-party system so that issues that develop in the virtual sphere go in two directions; apart from that, other countries in Asia tend to implement a semi-democratic system where the presidential election process is not wholly handed over to the people to choose. Therefore, this research proposes a different research object to capture how political conversations in Indonesia are using the virtual sphere and digital democracy approaches. We understand that there are extensive limitations in understanding political phenomena, especially when capturing democratic countries like Indonesia with a multi-party system and presidential system.

As a democratic country with a presidential system where the president is elected through an open general election system supported by political parties, the electoral system in Indonesia, which provides thresholds for presidential candidacy, requires political parties to collaborate in order to nominate a presidential-vice presidential candidate pair. Political parties have the right to nominate candidates for president and vice president in Indonesia's open election system. According to the election system, a pair of presidential and vice-presidential candidates must receive 20% of the political vote, or a 21% threshold, to be elected. Therefore, Three pairs, Anies Baswedan-Muhaiman Iskandar, Prabowo Subianto-Gibran Rakabuming, and Ganjar Pranowo-Mafhud MD, will participate in the 2024 presidential election. The three pairs of candidates were officially appointed as presidential-vice presidential candidates by the general election commission. After being determined by the general election commission as a presidential-vice presidential candidate pair, the campaign period will be held from November 28, 2023-February 10, 2024. Through the campaign, the candidate pair promotes ideas for leading the country for the next five years; the way the campaign is carried out is quite innovative depending on the character of the presidential candidate-vice president as well as the work programs put forward by the three pairs of candidates.

At the same time as the election period, Indonesia has a reasonably high population bonus, where the population lives in cyberspace; this factor is what drives presidential and vice presidential campaigns not only face-to-face but also online, through social media, YouTube and online media (Irawan, Loilatu, Akbar, & Reynaldi, 2022). The three pairs of candidates utilized the media they had to obtain as many votes as possible by creating information and video content that was able to influence voters with videos that were considered up-to-date and answered voters' needs. Based on the APJII report, Indonesia, the country with the highest population of social media users in the world, has 167 million people accessing

social and online media to get information and entertainment. Understanding this, the three presidential and vice presidential candidates use social media for branding. Based on the description above, this research aims to capture political conversations during the presidential and vice presidential elections in Indonesia. In more detail, this research proposes a virtual sphere approach as a public sphere idea, which is referred to as a virtual sphere in several pieces of literature. We assume that not many election cases in Indonesia are presented using this approach. Therefore, the research provides novelty to the development of political science studies and the use of ICT in it through virtual sphere theory.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Public Sphere and Virtual Sphere

The public sphere is a dialectical relationship between the public sphere and politics through a specific mechanism called a political actor; in another definition, the public sphere is a dialectical process built by political actors through norms, social structures and political action (Adut, 2012). Wright & Street (2007) state that the public sphere, with community involvement, has created a strong democracy; therefore, Habermas (2010) states that the public sphere is a bridging medium for society and the state or political actors. Long before this concept was conveyed, it would transform (Gestrich, 2006), and the public space could change into anything depending on the conditions that occurred at that time (Gestrich, 2006). The public sphere functions as a form of power-sharing carried out through open mechanisms (Dahlberg, 2005); this method is considered as a transformation of the public sphere by Habermas where ideas can grow and develop with different backgrounds (Gestrich, 2006); therefore, the public sphere becomes a public space that is open for different views to be discussed and becomes a public discourse formed by the state, political actors or other organizations.

A country with a sound democratic system combined with public participation can build opinions about a developing issue (Dahlberg, 2005); in Adut's view (Adut, 2012), The public sphere is a space where norms are not visible, meaning that political actors can talk about an issue but it is outside their character as social beings. Both arguments understand that there is human behaviour that does not appear to be political beings. According to Mazali (2008), there is a new public sphere that provides space for humans to interact and build public opinion that intersects with each other; this intersection occurs in any space where technology can create that space (Loader & Mercea, 2011).

The public sphere does not only take physical form but also takes other forms; Papacharissi (2002) called it a virtual sphere. The virtual sphere is considered a new medium for promoting ideas through news media, social media or websites (Papacharissi, 2020); through new media, public space can be filled through open-access digital channels with very open information (Milovanovic, 2021). In Mazali's view (Mazali, 2011), new media allows anyone to create a new community with different issues or ideas; through new communities built with social media

(Wahyudi & Loilatu, 2023), they can provide information freely and can be discussed by members of the community. From the descriptions above, Papacharissi (2002) concluded that the public sphere, in its transition to a virtual sphere, was created by using ICT functions as a tool to build a virtual sphere.

2.2. Social Media and Digital Democracy

Social media is an interaction platform for millions of people on strategic issues (Kruse et al., 2018); social media drives major transformations for humans through online platforms that connect each other quickly (Price, 2013); social media functions as a platform that can create new social movements. Several literatures have identified a model of using social media as a forum for democracy, Hacker & van Dijk (2014) calling it part of digital democracy. Through digital democracy, users can build networks with users and become facilitators for the community to get involved in election activities and other democratic processes (Loader & Mercea, 2011). Social media, with its strong communication network, encourages the public to get involved in the issue by providing the same or different arguments (Khan, 2017); according to Lee & Hong (2016), This type of participation model forms a positive association towards a developing issue and is also able to create inclusive democracy with participation through public opinion and public services (Iosifidis, 2011).

Congge et al. (2023) to build digital democracy, we need to pay attention to ICT infrastructure as the central part to connect users; ICT is the primary tool that supports the realization of the democratic process because it creates space to connect to it through ICT infrastructure. The view of Wiklund (2005) is that the function of ICT in democracy is to improve communication patterns between society and government or build a more extensive communication network (Hacker & van Dijk, 2014). Apart from this, the development of concepts such as digital democracy has provided a new way of viewing the public sphere, which has been defined as a virtual space with a small audience that a digital public sphere can replace through digital democracy mechanisms (Akbar et al., 2021), where information becomes an important part and can be transferred quickly to the public, strengthens the position of government institutions in responding (Coleman et al., 1999). The function of social media as a platform for digital democracy has been well supported through network infrastructure. On the other hand, the high number of social media users is the main factor in the public sphere experiencing a shift into a virtual space.

3. Methodology

3.1. Methods and Data Sources

Social media provides a tremendous amount of diverse sources of information; these data sources can be accessed openly through analytical tools (Levin et al., 2017). Huang & Wong (2016), by using analytical tools, you can map all conversations on social media by capturing all information. Generally, this data can be

analyzed using the Social Network Analysis approach to understand the characteristics of the information (Zheng et al., 2016) via social media data (Toivonen et al., 2019). SNA, through the data mining process, functions to identify the character of information from social media through keywords and sentiments that occur in it (Barbier, 2011). According to Tam & Kim (2019), SNA using Social Media Analysis (SMA) with the tools in this research provides access to open information so that the analysis becomes in-depth. SNA, according to Williamson & Ruming (2016), is a method for case study so that the findings in the research can be displayed through network visualization or images of the cases being analyzed (Saqr et al., 2018).

To cover the data in the Indonesia election 2024, this research uses secondary data sourced from Drone Emprit. We classify data sources to explain the types of phenomena that occur each month and understand what topics arise during that period. Data were taken from December 2023-January 2024, According to Walden-Schreiner et al. (2018) to cover data, and information is obtained through digital platforms that are used and accessed from anywhere, in the same view as Huang & Wong (2016) Judging by social media data, we can obtain real-time information regarding events that occur, in this case, the Indonesian election. Therefore, the data source in this research comes from Dore Emprit, referring to views (Huang & Wong, 2016) as an example of the primary data in a study. Data is categorised according to the standards of the research; we use Microsoft Excel to enter secondary data from Drone Emprit to determine the data requirements; the output of the data input will be shown as word clouds, graphs, and sentiment. With the help of this function, data will be grouped more clearly; therefore, the objective and research questions will be more precise in determining the data structure.

3.2. Context Cases

We analyzed the presidential election in Indonesia from December to January. This case was chosen by looking at the interaction patterns that occurred on social media during the campaign period and the presidential-vice presidential candidate debate. Research context to specify the data taken, processed and analyzed. The reason for choosing this case is because the number of social media users will increase, and interactions during that time will be very high. We understand that Indonesia is a country with a high number of social media users, so the presidential election is high, and the benefits of social media as a promotional medium for presidential and vice presidential candidates are enormous.

4. Finding and Discussion

The election for the president and vice president of Indonesia will be held on February 14, 2024, two months before the voting; the presidential and vice presidential candidates will be given time to campaign for a vision and mission to lead Indonesia. During the campaign period, the Indonesian General Election Commission

also held debate sessions for presidential-vice presidential candidates to explain and test the vision and mission of each candidate pair to determine which was best for the Indonesian people. The presidential-vice presidential election was attended by Anies Baswedan-Muhaimin Iskandar (Anies-Muhaimin), Prabowo Subianto-Gibran Rakabuming Raka (Prabowo-Gibran) and Ganjar Pranowo-Mahfud MD (Ganjar-Mahfud) (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Presidential-Vice presidential candidates.

As a democratic process, the election of the Indonesian president and vice president provides a public space for the public to be involved in it, both directly and indirectly. This form of direct involvement can be done through virtual participation through the use of social media. These three pairs have a solid mass base, whether based on regional distribution or based on the distribution of social media users. Indonesia's increasingly developing democratic and electoral processes can be seen from the form of participation in other developing countries such as the Philippines, where social media made a significant contribution to the victory of Ferdinand Marcos Jr. and Sara Duterte-Carpio, that means that social media functions to create a construction for the presidential-vice presidential candidate pair.

4.1. Mentions on Social Media and Online News

The virtual sphere is considered a new medium for promoting ideas through news media, social media or websites (Papacharissi, 2020); with this tool, public space can be filled through open-access digital channels with very open information (Milovanovic, 2021). In the view of Mazali (2011), with new media, anyone can create a new community to build community participation with issues or ideas that are currently developing. Through new communities built with social media, information can be provided freely and discussed by members of the community. Papacharissi (2002) said that the public sphere, in its transition to a virtual sphere, was created by using ICT functions as a tool to build a virtual sphere. The three pairs of candidates used social media to gain support from a base they could not reach. This method was also used in the 2016 presidential election in the United States by Clinton and Trump, where the public could access information from both of them through their campaign methods (Davis, 2017).

The very high number of Indonesian social media users creates a new interaction

space that anyone at any given time can access. Indonesian social media users will reach 137 million in 2023, which will make a significant contribution to penetration and interaction on social media. This can be shown through several trending topics during the 2024 presidential-vice presidential debate. Apart from the very high number of social media users, Indonesia is also one of the countries with active social media users, so much time is spent accessing social media. In several studies, social media has provided benefits for political activities, one of which is through political branding, which is carried out to promote candidates, policy ideas, and winning strategies. According to Lewis (2020), High interaction on social media is driven by central actors who participate in promoting one of the candidates through mainstream media (Lewis, 2020) so that unlimited time micro-influencers can provide information to get support (Lewis, 2020; Park et al., 2021; Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan, 2012). General elections in Indonesia have a character when seen from the use of social media users, where social media functions to attack opponents and compare political candidates (Irawanto, 2019).

This research shows that the number of interactions that occurred in the period from December to January shows that interaction patterns accumulate in different numbers based on the issues raised during the debate. See Figure 2, the number of mentions in the debate session held by the general election commission. Anies-Muhaimin received mentions reaching (62,878) in the first debate on 12/12/2023, while in the second debate, the total mentions reached (50,705) with mentions on social media Twitter (46,368) and online news (4337). The third debate, 07/01/2024, had total mentions (442,382) with mentions on Twitter (429,301) and online news (13,093). In the fourth debate, the total mentions were (32,594) with mentions on social media, Twitter (31,101) and online media (1493).

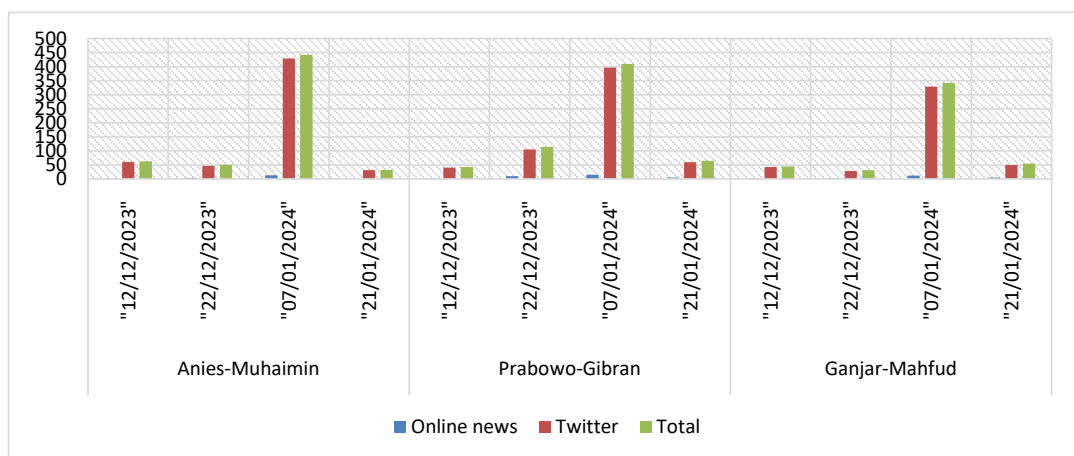


Figure 2. Mentions on social media and online news.

The public response to the Prabowo-Gibran pair was higher than the Anies-Muhaimin and Ganjar-Mahfud pairs, although in the first debate it was somewhat lower, only getting mentions (42,791) public responses, while in the next debate Prabowo-Gibran got as many mentions as (114,465) with the number of mentions

on social media as many as (104,771) and online media 9694). In the third debate, 07/01/2024, the number of mentions increased to (409,472) with mentions of social media Twitter (396,649) and online news (15,034). In the third debate 01/21/2024 the number of mentions of this pair decreased, but compared to other pairs, the total mentions of Prabowo-Gibran were higher, the total mentions of Prabowo-Gibran (65,197) on social media Twitter (59,703) and online news (5494).

Compared to the other two pairs, the public response to Ganjar-Mahfud was lower; in the four debates held, Ganjar-Mahfud was the pair with the least number of mentions on Twitter; in the first debate, 12/12/2023, Ganjar-Mahfud received a total of responses (44,674) with reactions from social media Twitter (42,969) and mentions of online news (1706), in the second debate 12/22/2023 total mentions (31,766) with mentions from social media Twitter (28,247) and online news (3521). In the third debate 01/07/2024 total mentions (341,603) with the number of social media mentions (329,390) and online news (12,211), and in the third debate the total mentions of the Ganjar-Mahfud pair (54,411) with social media mentions (49,236) and online news mentions (5205).

4.2. Sentiment Analysis

Look at the picture above; sentiment towards each pair of candidates shows different responses to each pair of presidential-vice presidential candidates. This response is related to the debate that was held at that time. In the first debate, the sentiment was positive for Anies-Muhaimin (64%) and negative (52%) for Prabowo-Gibran, so in the initial discussion on 12/12/2023 positive sentiment was obtained by Anies-Muhaimin and Negative Prabowo-Gibran. In the second debate on 12/22/2023, the sentiment was positive (70%) for Prabowo-Gibran, and the sentiment was negative (40%) for Anies-Muhaimin. In the two debates held in December, the Ganjar-Mahfud pair was the pair that received the number two positive and number two negative responses, meaning that this pair, in facing the debate, took a neutral position to answer, respond and provide views on the debate theme.

Meanwhile, in the third debate on 01/07/2024, Anies-Muhaimin received positive sentiment (76%), as did Ganjar-Mahfud (72%). In comparison, Prabowo-Gibran received negative sentiment (54%); Prabowo's ability caused negative sentiment towards Prabowo. To answer his duties and functions as Minister of Defense for the last five years, Prabowo's ability to deliver strategic issues regarding defence was assessed by social media users in the valley, thereby further highlighting Prabowo's inability to address this theme. At the same time, many users expect that Prabowo can answer and potentially dominate debates about national defence and security. In the fourth debate related to natural resource management, two pairs received positive sentiment from social media users (80%) for Anies-Muhaimin, (79%) for Ganjar-Pranowo and (33%) positive sentiment for Prabowo-Gibran, meaning Gibran received higher negative sentiment than the two pairs. The

analysis results showed that Prabowo-Gibran received a negative response of (60%); **Figure 3** was the highest number of public responses in the debate.

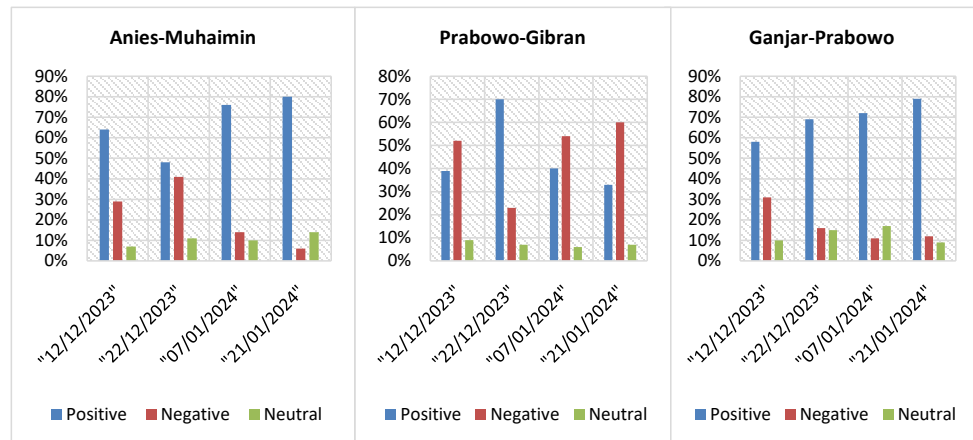


Figure 3. Sentiment towards presidential-vice presidential candidates.

This negative response was caused by behaviour in participating in the debate, as well as several strategic issues that were deemed unable to be answered well by the Prabowo-Gibran pair in the fourth debate. Another factor is the control of the stage, which is considered to be dominated by Ganjar-Mahfud and Anies-Muhaimin in the debate session 01/21/2024. From the results of the debate, the public (users) are involved in providing assessments of the candidate pairs and can convey ideas; public responses can be shown by mentions and categories of tweets sent via social media to respond to the issues being debated. [Alamanda et al. \(2019\)](#) state that sentiment in social media shows likes and dislikes towards a problem so that it can influence a person's perception of the product (politics) being conveyed. The findings of this research indicate that the Prabowo-Gibran couple has a higher negative sentiment than Anies-Muhaimin and Ganjar-Mahfud. For the democratic process, positive and negative sentiments have subjective meanings ([Congge et al., 2023](#)) based on support groups (clusters) on social media. Generally, negative responses in general elections are associated with political party groups that create issues on social media ([Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan, 2012](#)). However, in the Indonesian presidential-vice presidential election, this cluster was created by fan groups and the influencer base. [Abbiyyu & Nindyaswari \(2022\)](#) referred to as political buzzers, a group of social media users who were active on social media to compare Jokowi in 2014.

4.3. The Most Popular Topic on Political Conversation

These findings show that the content conveyed via social media as a public response and assessment of each candidate pair carries messages and emotions that touch the public. The findings of this research show that the form of messages that are emotional or feeling can be displayed using the word cloud in **Figure 4**. The findings in the study show that the issues debated on social media during the

ethics in violating the constitution and have no understanding of issues of security and the digital economy. Another harmful content from **Figure 4** describes the Prabowo-Gibran pair, which shows negative behaviour when arguing with Anies-Muhaimin and Ganjar-Mahfud.

Furthermore, the content in **Figure 4** also explains the issues and conversations on social media during the debate period for the Ganjar-Mahfud pair. The word cloud content in **Figure 4**, the third row, contains several categories such as professor, academic, small change, vice presidential debate, Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal and Security Affairs, Mahfud, Koten. This shows Ganjar-Mahfud's ability as a presidential-vice presidential candidate with experience and knowledge. On the other hand, the content explains the position of Prabowo-Gibran, who attacked the Ganjar-Mahfud pair through gestures and tricky questions so that high-frequency words such as "trap" appear "gimmick", "snobbish", and "arrogant". The content in the third row of images also shows the solid position of the party supporting Ganjar-Mahfud on certain bases, especially Java, so that they can influence the voting public. The personification of the Ganjar-Mahfud pair as presidential and vice presidential candidates who are close to the people and understand the problems that exist with the people. This method was used to imitate Joko Widodo in the 2014 and 2019 presidential elections, who was personified as a president who was close and born to the people.

The use of social media helps presidential and vice presidential candidates to reach voters and connect through political narratives of change and sustainability with the people. The three pairs of candidates create public opinion to show which pair is better and has a dominant power base. The findings in this study answered that the Ganjar-Mahfud candidate pair had fewer contributors in creating issues on social media, so several trending topics during the campaign period for this pair tended to be lower. We assume that from this research analysis, the ability of the Ganjar-Mahfud pair to construct public opinion on social media is not that massive, so the role of social media users is needed to enter and discuss positive issues regarding the Ganjar-Mahfud pair. Conceptually, public space is defined as a liberal space. Democracy (Adut, 2012), where there is a shift in the physical space of democracy. Therefore, Yang et al. (2017) assume that social media is not the primary tool in the democratization process for society.

However, in its function, social media has been utilized well by several supporters to promote the ideas of presidential candidates. This can be shown by the nature of the information created by the mass base of supporters on social media. (Kruse et al., 2018). Twitter social media users promote presidential and vice presidential candidates through several hashtags, which function to create framing for the candidate pair. Social media consistently promotes issues regarding political candidates but does not consistently promote political ideas (Kubin & von Sikorski, 2021), thus creating online discourse (Pal & Gonawela, 2017); in mature democracies, the function of online discourse is to refine political ideas that the presidential and vice presidential candidate pairs have not explained. In this case, the

role of micro-influencers is to persuasively deliver programs for candidate pairs (Pal & Gonawela, 2017).

Online discourse created by social media users towards Anies-Muhaimin identified them as a group of k-poppers who voluntarily provided support for Anies-Muhaimin through the volunteer movement by creating a website, video throne, campaign props and several direct campaign activities; therefore, “Anies Bubble” is a group that consistently supports Anies-Muhaimin, this group comes from a non-political party movement to create democracy through Anies-Muhaimin’s views. In several trends on Twitter social media, this group can be identified through hashtags such as #AniesBubble, #Abah, #HaveAniesDay, #SobatAbahAnies, #NazarPemilu, #Chalwin. Several other trending topics, such as #Pendukung01, #AminAjaDulu, #AminkanIndonesia, or #JISvsGBK, are trending topic categories that occur at any time outside of ongoing debate activities. See Figure 5.

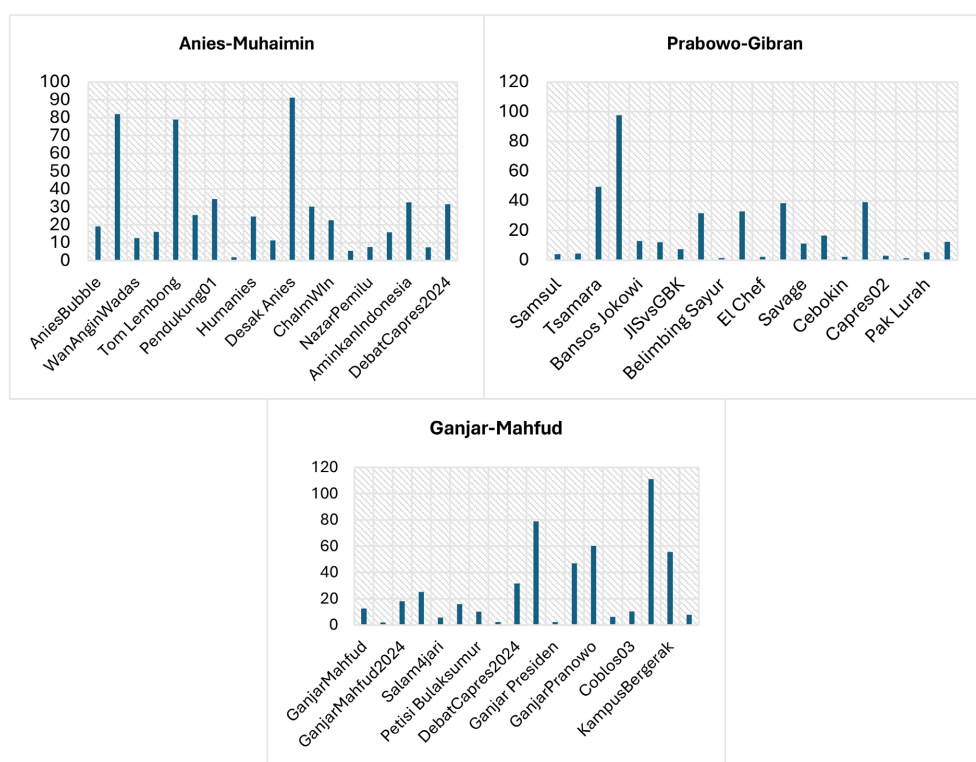


Figure 5. Popular hashtags for presidential-vice presidential candidates.

In the previous explanation, negative sentiment towards the Prabowo-Gibran couple also had an impact on popular topics on social media, from the highest hashtags to several issues such as #Samsul, #BlimbingSayur, #Savage, #Songong, #Omon-omon and #OriginalNotPrabowo showed that the trending topic was towards This pair is opposing. However, other popular hashtags have had an impact on this couple on social media, such as #BansosJokowi, #ElChef, #Kampanye02, and #PindahKe02. That means that not all trending topics on social media have negative sentiments (Dahlgren, 2005). It is defined as a form of deliberative

politics that provides a virtual space for social media users to campaign

Furthermore, the findings in this research show that the types of supporters of the Anies-Muhaimin and Ganjar-Mahfud pairs have the same intersection when campaigning for their candidates; apart from that, these two groups have the same dear enemy, namely Prabowo-Gibran with the power of shadow power (Jokowi). The hashtag category for the Ganjar-Mahfud pair consists of #GanjarMahfud, #Ganjar-Mahfud2024, #Salam4Jari, #KitaAdalah3, #NowGanjar, #GanjarPresidenRakyat, #Poblos3, these hashtags contributed positively to Ganjar-Mahfud during the debate period. Other hashtags such as #MovingKampus, #PetisiBulaksumur, #Salam4Jari, and #AfterUGM are trending topics that show the strength of civil society, which is involved in the Ganjar-Mahfud axis in the presidential and vice-presidential elections. This topic also has a positive effect on the Anies-Muhaimin couple, who are pushing for change that is not supported by government power (Jokowi). The hashtag use category indirectly creates offence for other supporters of the couple. According to Mazali (2008), in new media, where users are more anonymous, information can attack each other, meaning that social media functions well for candidate pairs to create essential issues (Loader & Mercea, 2011).

From the findings of Figure 5 according to Enli & Skogerbo (2013), to increase popularity, it is necessary to personalize the presidential and vice presidential candidates. Through the hashtag, the presidential and vice presidential candidates highlight their characters with information and hashtags. The presidential-vice presidential candidate pair is highlighted as a way of communication (Bracciale & Martella, 2017); the three candidate pairs have communication characteristics of three: the Anies-Muhaimin pair communicate openly by answering mentions from users, while the Prabowo-Gibran is passive in using social media, both of them only have micro-influencers. (Lewis, 2020; Pal & Gonawela, 2017). Meanwhile, the Ganjar-Mahfud pair is active in providing information and answering mentions from social media users. Therefore, the three candidate pairs, Anies-Muhaimin and Ganjar-Mahfud, have a style of communicating on social media (Bracciale & Martella, 2017).

4.4. Social Network Analysis

Figure 6, social network analysis, shows user engagement in creating issues during the debate period; SNA explains support for candidate pairs. The results of the Drone Emprit analysis report in December 2023 and January 2024 in two presidential (left) and vice presidential (right) debates show social network analysis. Each point (node) represents an individual or Twitter account, and each line (edge) represents an interaction. From the visualization, Anies Baswedan has a very active and extensive retweet network of 57,186 retweets, marked by dense dots and has a high level of connectedness among his supporters. Prabowo Subianto also has a significant retweet network of 36,776 retweets, with clusters in several areas indicating the existence of a highly connected supporter group. Ganjar Pranowo has 26,342 retweets, with several clusters indicating a concentration

of supporters, although apparently not as intensely as Anies Baswedan or Prabowo Subianto. While the SNA on the right shows interactions with the vice presidential pair, the Drone Emprit report of the pro-Gibran cluster is separate from each other, but it discusses support for Gibran and is quite solid. The Pro Mahfud cluster is more centralized and not spread out.

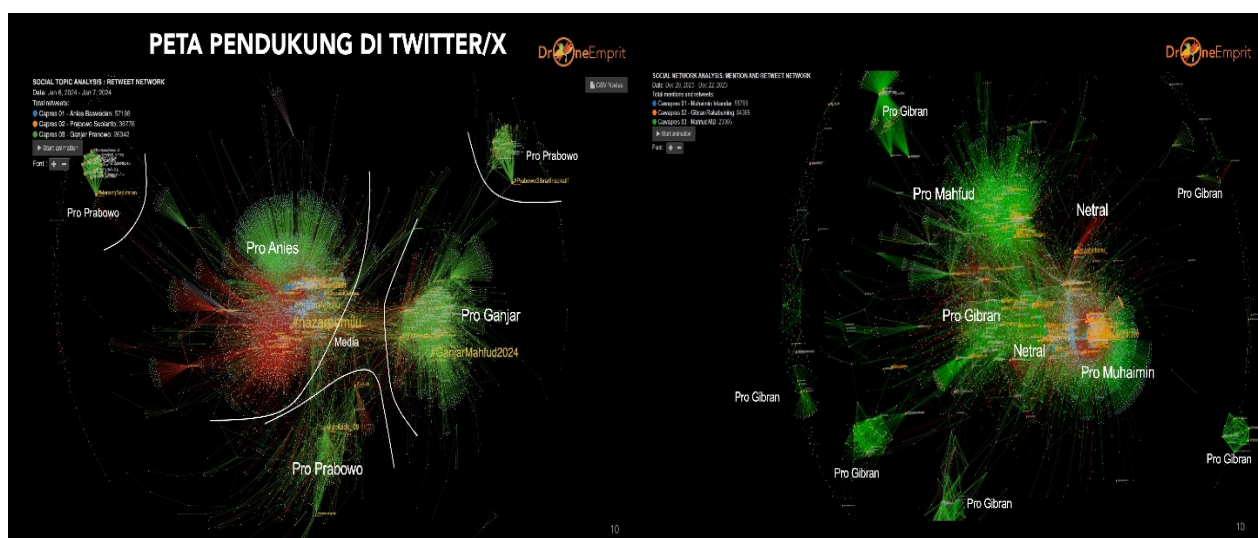


Figure 6. Social Network Analysis of presidential-vice presidential candidates. Source: Drone Emprit 2024.

Meanwhile, the Pro Muhaimin cluster is relatively medium in size compared to the two clusters. The cluster relationship at each node shows support through information exchange, which is demonstrated through retweets. Centrality can be seen in the thickness and density of the network from the two SNA images. Therefore, each supporter of the pair created a cluster as a form of support during the Prisedin-Vice President debate.

See **Figure 6**; interactions with candidate pairs can be formed into several issues through social media, and these issues can be formed to support framing (Kruse et al., 2018). Issues such as change, sustainability and improvement conveyed by the three pairs of candidates connect networks and network patterns within them. Therefore, in the same view, Price (2013) states that social media is appropriate, as it supports digital democracy (Hacker & van Dijk, 2014; Papacharissi, 2020; Wright & Street, 2007). This research highlights the function of social media in creating digital democracy through the concept of the virtual sphere, where conflicts and debates transition to the digital space (Rosecrance, 1996). Thus, it can be understood that political participation on social media is short-term based on momentum but can increase at any time with a larger scale of issues.

Through digital democracy, users can build networks with users and become facilitators for the community to get involved in election activities and other democratic processes (Loader & Mercea, 2011). Social media creates strong networks and encourages the public to get involved in issues by providing the same or different arguments (Khan, 2017). According to Lee & Hong (2016), This participation

model forms a positive association towards a developing issue and is also able to create inclusive democracy by encouraging high participation through public opinion and public services. (Iosifidis, 2011). Understanding the balanced function of social media and public space, the use of ICT as a technological tool becomes an integral part of ensuring participation in the virtual sphere. According to Congge et al. (2023), to guarantee massive participation, ICT infrastructure is the most essential part.

5. Conclusion

This research concludes that the virtual sphere functions functionally as a medium for creating interaction on Twitter social media by each supporter (users); the idea of a virtual sphere proposed in this research answers that Indonesian social media users have character when seen from each of them. Supporters on social media. The Anies-Muhaimin pair is a candidate who is able to attract people well by getting high and positive engagement. In terms of sentiment, this pair received a positive response and, even though in terms of total mentions, it was less than Prabowo-Gibran, from the ideas and position of Anies-Muhamin promoting #Change as the tagline in the campaign. For the Prabowo-Gibran pair, candidates with high associations in the number of mentions 442,382 on online media and social media, even though they received the highest mentions on social media, Prabowo-Gibran's sentiment tended to be negative, this sentiment was caused by the personification and response of both of them to the two presidential-vice presidential candidate pairs Anies-Muhaimin and Ganjar-Mahfud. The ability of the Prabowo-Gibran pair to associate themselves with (Jokowi) provides enormous advantages for engagement from public figures and the government. Compared to others, Ganjar-Mahfud is a pair with a lower number of mentions; this pair has a low association with social media users, even though they are considered active in seeking interaction with social media users. In the sentiment analysis, Ganjar-Mahfud was the pair that received better positive sentiment than Prabowo-Gibran, but in the two presidential-vice presidential debates, the positive sentiment towards Ganjar-Mahfud was higher.

The results of the analysis underline that the virtual sphere was built through voluntary movements owned by the Anies-Muhaimin candidate pair to promote ideas about change and Anies-Muhaimin's experience in leading. Another pair used micro-influencers to make opinions about Prabowo-Gibran and create an extensive association with (Jokowi) even though they had negative sentiments. Ganjar-Mahfud is a presidential and vice presidential candidate who promotes the public sphere through active use of Twitter social media by creating active communication with other users, thus becoming the main contributor in building an issue on Twitter social media.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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