

Polarization and Political Mental Health on TikTok in the 2024 Jakarta Gubernatorial Election

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ABSTRACT

Political polarization on social media is becoming increasingly massive ahead of electoral contests, including in the 2024 Jakarta Regional/Gubernatorial Election. This dynamic has the potential to increase psychological stress and affect users' political mental health. This study aims to analyse how political polarization on TikTok strengthens echo chambers and impacts young voters' political mental health. With a qualitative approach, this study uses discourse analysis methods, in-depth interviews with young voters, political influencers, and political communication experts, as well as participant observation of content discussing candidate pairs number 1 (Ridwan Kamil-Suswono) and number 3 (Pramono Anung-Rano Karno). Research findings reveal systemic failure of TikTok's algorithm, which creates political polarization through structured cognitive manipulation, exploiting users' confirmation bias to maintain engagement without considering mental health impacts. The platform operates as a social fragmentation mechanism that impedes democratic deliberation, creating echo chambers that erode Indonesia's young generation's critical thinking capabilities. Findings demonstrate normalization of digital violence and political dehumanization that threatens social stability. Fundamental reform of algorithmic architecture and comprehensive regulation are required to prevent corporate exploitation of Indonesia's democratic processes, alongside the necessity for more inclusive platform policies and digital literacy strategies to foster openness toward diverse political perspectives, thereby minimizing polarization's negative impacts on society's political mental health.

Keywords: *Political polarization, TikTok, echo chamber, political mental health, 2024 Jakarta regional/gubernatorial election.*

INTRODUCTION

Social media has become the primary arena for political discourse and public engagement in the evolving dynamics of democracy in the digital era. TikTok, as one of the short-form video platforms experiencing rapid growth, has transformed into a unique political interaction space where individuals can disseminate, consume, and respond to political narratives in a fast-paced and highly personalized format. TikTok's role in political discourse, particularly in the context of the 2024 Jakarta Election, highlights both opportunities and challenges in the digital era. As a platform, TikTok has become a significant space for political interaction, especially among younger audiences, due to its capacity to facilitate creative political expression and engagement (Literat & Kligler-Vilenchik, 2023). The platform's unique format enables rapid dissemination and consumption of political narratives, which can lead to

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increased user engagement and potentially greater influence compared to other social media platforms (Alonso-López & Sidorenko-Bautista, 2023). However, this rapid content dissemination also contributes to political polarization, as users often engage with content that reinforces their existing beliefs, creating echo chambers that intensify divisions (Magdaci et al., 2022).

Political communication dynamics on TikTok, as observed in other contexts such as Peru's elections, often focus more on politics than substantive political discourse, with politicians utilizing the platform to enhance their personal image rather than engaging in meaningful dialogue (Cervi, Tejedor, & Blesa, 2023). This trend raises concerns about potential psychological impacts on users, as the platform's content can reinforce polarized viewpoints and contribute to a fragmented public opinion landscape (de Zúñiga, Inguanzo, & Ardèvol-Abreu, 2022). Therefore, while TikTok offers new avenues for political engagement, it also necessitates careful examination of its implications for political polarization and user well-being in democratic processes such as the Jakarta elections (Cervi et al., 2023; Literat & Kligler-Vilenchik, 2023). This phenomenon becomes increasingly relevant in the context of the 2024 Jakarta Regional Election, a political contest that often serves as a barometer for national political dynamics. As the intensity of political discussions on TikTok escalates, concerns emerge regarding the escalation of political polarization that not only reinforces public opinion segregation but also potentially provides psychological impacts for its users.

TikTok's algorithm, designed to maximize user engagement by aligning content with user preferences, significantly contributes to political polarization by fostering echo chambers and filter bubbles, which impede exposure to diverse viewpoints and reinforce confirmation bias. Echo chambers are environments where individuals are primarily exposed to information that reinforces their existing beliefs, thereby strengthening ideological gaps and reducing exposure to diverse perspectives (Ghafouri, Alatawi, Karami, Such, & Suárez-Tangil, 2024; Namazzi, 2024). This phenomenon is not unique to TikTok but is prevalent across various social media platforms, as evidenced by research on platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, where misinformation and extreme partisan content generate higher engagement and evoke stronger negative emotions, contributing to attitude polarization (Weismueller, Gruner, Harrigan, Coussement, & Wang, 2023). TikTok, with its distinctive short-form video format, intensifies these effects by promoting selective exposure and homophily, leading to the formation of homogeneous user clusters that exacerbate echo chamber effects (Gao & Liu, 2023). However, TikTok's current algorithmic state, similar to other short-form video platforms, continues to prioritize engagement over viewpoint diversity, thereby contributing to political anxiety and political fatigue among users due to repeated exposure to polarized content (Gao & Liu, 2023; Hada et al., 2022).

Referring to the urgency of these issues, this research endeavours to identify patterns of political polarization occurring on TikTok preceding the 2024 Jakarta Regional Election and to explore its impacts on users' political mental health. This research aims to provide theoretical contributions in understanding the complex relationships between political content consumption on TikTok, polarization, and users' mental health. Furthermore, the findings of this research are expected to offer insights for policymakers and social media platforms in designing more effective mitigation strategies to reduce the negative impacts of political polarization in digital spaces.

Social media platforms, particularly TikTok, play a crucial role in reinforcing political polarization, which can adversely affect users' mental health, especially during politically charged periods such as the 2024 Jakarta Election. The algorithmic nature of these platforms

creates filter bubbles and echo chambers, where users are predominantly exposed to content that aligns with their existing beliefs, thereby limiting exposure to diverse perspectives (Lin & Tsai, 2022). This selective exposure exacerbates ideological polarization, as users become more entrenched in their views, believing them to be widely held, which can lead to increased political anxiety and emotional tension (Lin & Tsai, 2022). The phenomenon of affective polarization, where users develop strong in-group favouritism and avoid opposing views, further isolates groups and intensifies polarization (Wakefield & Wakefield, 2022). This is compounded by the spread of misinformation and extreme partisan content, which evoke stronger negative emotions such as anger, contributing to attitude polarization (Weismueller et al., 2023). Such emotional responses are more pronounced among users at ideological extremes, leading to increased engagement with polarizing content (Weismueller et al., 2023). The mental health implications are significant, as constant exposure to affirming yet divisive narratives can heighten stress and anxiety levels among users engaged in digital political discourse (Meier & Reinecke, 2021).

Based on this problem, this study seeks to answer several fundamental questions: How does political polarization on TikTok in the lead-up to the 2024 Jakarta Regional Election affect users' political mental health? And what indicators can be used to measure the impact of political polarization on political mental health among TikTok users? By examining these questions, this research is expected to provide deeper understanding of the phenomenon of political polarization in the digital era and its implications for the psychological well-being of society.

This research examines political polarization dynamics on TikTok before the 2024 Jakarta Regional Election and its implications for users' political mental health. This study seeks to identify polarization patterns emerging in political interactions on TikTok, analyse how the platform's algorithm reinforces echo chambers, and explore psychological impacts such as political anxiety, stress, and political fatigue. The interdisciplinary approach combining political communication studies and media psychology reveals polarization mechanisms occurring on TikTok and explores how individuals respond to intense political exposure in local elections. Research results are expected to provide theoretical contributions to social media and political polarization studies, and offer practical implications for policymakers, social media platforms, and political actors in designing inclusive communication strategies that minimize negative impacts on public mental health.

Political polarization in the digital era is significantly influenced by social media, which catalyses misinformation and extreme partisan content spread, exacerbating societal divisions. Weismueller et al. (2023) found that misinformation and extreme partisan information on social media generate higher engagement and stronger negative emotions than accurate information, contributing to attitude polarization. This aligns with Marino and Iannelli (2023), who noted that political polarization significantly predicts consumption and sharing of problematic information, highlighting research gaps regarding this relationship's theoretical foundations. Overgaard and Collier demonstrate that partisanship and platform usage, such as Google and Twitter, influence trust in political claims, with affectively polarized individuals more likely to accept pro-attitudinal misinformation (Overgaard & Collier, 2023). Vasist et al. (2023) emphasize disinformation and hate speech's role in global societal polarization, indicating that while internet censorship and social media monitoring can reduce these effects, they may inadvertently support environments conducive to hate speech. In Czechia, Macková et al. (2023) identified that perceived discussion disagreement and

attitudinal homogeneity on social networking sites are associated with political antagonism and affective polarization, challenging notions about universal patterns of social media usage contributing to polarization. These studies underscore complex interactions between social media, misinformation, and political polarization, necessitating nuanced approaches to address these digital era challenges.

The phenomenon of echo chambers and filter bubbles on social media, where individuals are largely exposed to information aligning with their political views, significantly contributes to political polarization by reinforcing confirmation bias and limiting exposure to diverse perspectives. Research by Hada et al. (2022) highlights the lack of viewpoint diversity in online discussions, particularly on politically charged topics such as immigration, where anti-immigration views often remain within echo chambers, while pro-immigration views face more opposition. Chan and Lee (2022) further explain that factors such as political partisanship, media trust, and social media usage influence the likelihood of escaping these echo chambers, with those who spend more time on social media and have lower media trust more frequently encountering different viewpoints. Kobellarz et al. (2022) emphasize that even when cross-partisan news is distributed, users tend to engage more with content aligning with their political orientation, underscoring the challenge of reaching across ideological divides. Törnberg (2022) identifies digital media's role in exacerbating affective polarization through partisan sorting, which intensifies negative intergroup feelings and threatens social cohesion. Consequently, social media serves not only as a channel for political communication, but also as a discourse battlefield that can sharpen social and political conflicts.

TikTok's unique algorithmic approach to content distribution significantly influences the digital political landscape by creating personalized experiences that can lead to homogeneous opinion environments. Unlike platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, which rely on social network-based interactions, TikTok's machine learning-based recommendation system curates content based on user behaviour, such as watch time and engagement rates, reinforcing exposure to specific political content (Alonso-López & Sidorenko-Bautista, 2023; Cervi et al., 2023). This personalization is evident in various political contexts, such as the Peruvian Presidential Election, where candidates primarily used TikTok for politics rather than substantive political discourse, focusing on personal life and entertainment to connect with younger audiences (Cervi et al., 2023). Similarly, in Spain and Poland, political actors utilized TikTok's reach differently, with political parties employing more rational appeals and leaders opting for emotional engagement, yet both approaches lacked significant personalization (Zamora-Medina, Šuminas, & Fahmy, 2023). The platform's role in political communication is further highlighted in global crises, such as the Russia-Ukraine war, where TikTok facilitated content remixing, enabling content creators to mediate distant suffering through emotional performances, influencing audiences' emotional responses (Primig, Szabó, & Lacasa, 2023).

The platform's algorithmic design, as explored by Scalvini (2023), promotes the semblance of inclusivity while actually encouraging digital conformism by recommending content that aligns with user preferences, thereby limiting exposure to diverse viewpoints. This aligns with findings by Gao and Liu (2023), who highlight that short-video platforms like TikTok intensify group polarization through echo chambers, driven by selective exposure and homophily, which can lead to the spread of misleading information. In the context of the 2024 Jakarta Regional Election, where local political dynamics often have the potential to generate social tensions, it is important to explore how TikTok's algorithm shapes digital political discourse and how this contributes to political polarization at the societal level.

Political mental health, a concept encompassing political anxiety, political fatigue, and political stress, emerges from continuous exposure to intense political debates on social media. Research indicates that political engagement can have detrimental effects on psychological well-being, as evidenced during the Trump administration, where many Americans reported increased stress, sleep difficulties, and even suicidal thoughts due to political events (Smith, 2022). This aligns with findings that sociopolitical stressors, such as those experienced by Latina women during the Trump presidency, are associated with increased psychological distress, including depression and anxiety, particularly when related to racism and women's rights (Wiley, Knorr, Chua, Garcia, & Fox, 2023). Social media's role in exacerbating political fatigue is crucial, as it encourages relentless interaction and exposure to conflict, contributing to mental exhaustion and reducing rational thinking (Klösch, Hadler, Reiter-Haas, & Lex, 2023). Furthermore, political determinants, such as government policies and ideologies, significantly impact mental health by shaping social determinants such as poverty and social integration, which affect individual well-being (Bhugra & Ventriglio, 2023). Political mental health refers to individuals' psychological well-being when facing political dynamics, particularly in polarized environments. The aspects include political anxiety, describing anxiety experienced due to political uncertainty, threats to held values, or perceptions of increasing social tensions; political fatigue, referring to mental exhaustion from excessive involvement in political discourse, often exacerbated by social media characteristics that encourage relentless interaction and exposure to repeated conflict; and political stress, emerging from continuous exposure to intense political debates on social media.

In the context of the 2024 Jakarta Regional Election, the increasing political polarization on TikTok has the potential to exacerbate the political mental health conditions of society, particularly among groups highly engaged in digital discourse. TikTok's characteristics that promote rapid virality of political content can create an environment filled with extreme narratives, political identity conflicts, and excessive exposure to opinions that trigger political stress. Therefore, this research aims to explore how consumption of political content on TikTok affects users' political mental health, focusing on factors that exacerbate or, conversely, have the potential to alleviate the psychological impacts of digital political polarization (Sanawi & Marzuki, 2025; Seceleanu, Garabet, & SUNDA, 2025).

Increasing political polarization in Indonesia, particularly among millennials, is exacerbated by digital media platforms such as TikTok, which prioritizes emotional narratives over rational discourse. This trend is evident in the 2024 Jakarta Election, where millennials, as significant voters, are vulnerable to misleading political campaigns and hate speech disseminated through social media, threatening social cohesion and constructive dialogue (Hasibuan & Sazali, 2024). Digital media further promotes affective polarization by facilitating partisan sorting, where individuals are sorted into echo chambers that reinforce extreme views and political conflicts, weakening trust in democratic institutions (Törnberg, 2022; Törnberg, Andersson, Andersson, Lindgren, & Banisch, 2021). This identity-centred polarization is particularly potent in Indonesia, a country with diverse languages, religions, and ethnicities, making it vulnerable to manipulative identity politics tactics in the post-truth era. Consequently, aggressive rhetoric and disinformation virality on platforms like TikTok contributes to increased anxiety and political fatigue among users, as they become immersed in controversial political environments.

METHODOLOGY

This research employs a qualitative approach with an interpretive paradigm to understand political polarization and political mental health on TikTok before the 2024 Jakarta Regional Election. This approach enables in-depth exploration of experiences, perceptions, and dynamics of political interactions occurring on the platform. Three main data collection methods are interviews, analysis of TikTok videos, and participant observation. In-depth interviews are conducted with relevant key informants: young voters, political influencers on TikTok, and political communication experts. Young voters are selected as informants because they constitute one of the largest segments of TikTok users active in political discourse. Political influencers on TikTok are examined to understand how they shape public opinion and reinforce political polarization. Meanwhile, political communication experts are interviewed to provide theoretical perspectives regarding social media's influence on political polarization and society's political mental health.

Participant observation is conducted by directly monitoring interactions and political content that develop on TikTok. The primary focus includes analysis of hashtag trends, interaction patterns in comment sections, use of duet and stitch features, and communication strategies employed in political videos. This technique enables deeper understanding of political content consumption and production dynamics on TikTok, and how the platform contributes to political polarization. Thematic analysis is used to identify patterns and main themes emerging from interview and observation data. This process is conducted through systematic data coding to discover dominant themes in young voters' experiences, influencer communication strategies, and expert perspectives regarding political polarization on TikTok.

To ensure data validity and reliability, this research applies data triangulation techniques. Triangulation is conducted by comparing results of in-depth interviews, participant observation, and content analysis to obtain a more objective and comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study. Additionally, member checking is conducted with several informants to confirm findings and ensure accurate interpretation of obtained data. With this systematic methodological approach, the research is expected to provide significant theoretical contributions in understanding TikTok's role in shaping political polarization and its impact on society's political mental health before the 2024 Jakarta Regional Election.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This research collects data from TikTok social media content about the 2024 Jakarta Regional Election, starting from the most frequently appearing hashtags. According to big data analysis from the Independent Election Awareness Committee (KISP), which analysed conversations on TikTok since September 25, 2024, social media conversations related to the Jakarta Gubernatorial Election on TikTok began emerging on September 25, 2024, when the campaign period started, then increased after October 6, 2024, coinciding with the first debate between Governor and Deputy Governor candidates. The most frequently used hashtags on TikTok related to the 2024 Jakarta Regional Election are #ridwankamil, #jakarta, #pramdoelmenang, #pilkadajakarta2024, #pilkada2024, #prakaruntukjakarta, #masprambangdoel (Komite Independen Sadar Pemilu, 2024).

Each collected content is analysed based on engagement metrics, including views, likes, comments, and interaction patterns in political discussions. Additionally, duet features, stitch, and hashtag usage serve as indicators to understand how political narratives about both candidate pairs develop and spread on TikTok. To ensure objectivity and accuracy, this

research combines content analysis with participant observation and in-depth interviews with young voters, political influencers, and political communication experts. Through this method, the research aims to provide an in-depth portrayal of how TikTok becomes an arena for political discourse contestation between candidate pairs with party support, and how this contributes to political polarization among voters before the 2024 Jakarta Regional Election.

Polarization Indicators on TikTok

Political polarization on TikTok is shaped by many factors, as evidenced by contemporary integration of scholarly research. The use of inflexible and derogatory language that incites hostility, referred to as:

a. The Rhetoric of the Fronts



Figure 1: "Rhetoric of the fronts" video indicator 1
 Source: Lintas Merdeka (2024), viewed January 7, 2025.



Figure 2: "Rhetoric of the fronts" video indicator 2
 Source: Asyarirudi (2024), viewed January 7, 2025.

The video screenshot in Figure 1 shows the excitement of candidate pair number 3 Pramono Anung-Rano Karno with their supporters. In this video, the audio and text displayed are chants created by supporters of candidate pair number 3 with the following lyrics:

... "This is the capital city// not West Java// Choose number 3// Don't choose the blasphemer// "Without celebrity endorsement// Mas Pram bang Doel remains The language used is highly emotional and provokes hostility, with words such as "blasphemer" and "vicious." popular// Without Jokowi's endorsement// "Mas Pram bang Doel remains in our hearts/"
(Singing Text form video on figure 1)

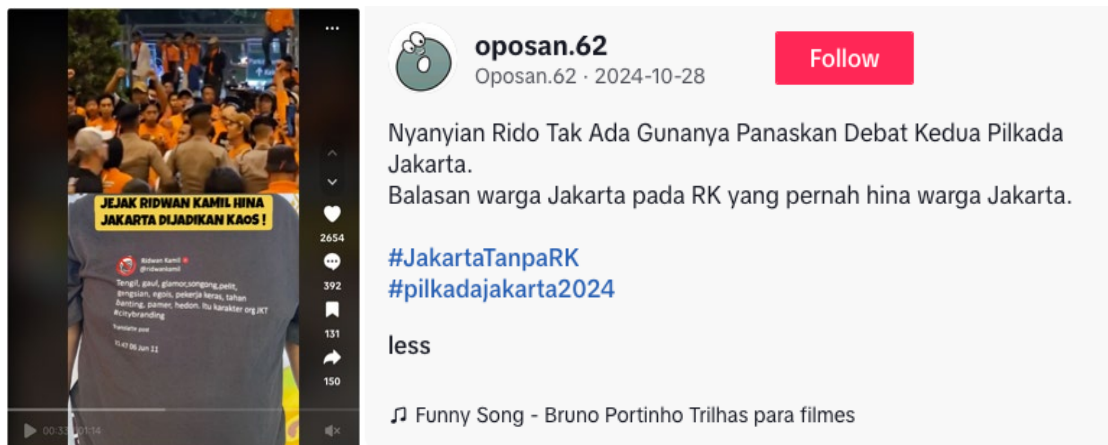
Meanwhile, the video screenshot in Figure 2 shows mass groups of supporters for candidate pair number 1 Ridwan Kamil-Suswono. This upload is a response to the previous video with audio and chant lyrics in the same tune but with different lyrics. The following are the lyrics displayed:

... "This is the capital city// not the Bull's cage// We are Jakarta residents// not Mega's children// "Useless to have Anis's endorsement// let alone Amien Rais// Bring down the vicious Bull// "Two Seven, the Bull cries/"
(Singing Text form video on figure 2)

As seen in the metadata comparison displayed, the second video has greater interactivity compared to the first video. However, both contents above explicitly display division between two political camps. The language used is highly emotional and provokes hostility, with words such as "blasphemer" and "vicious." The first video appears to deliberately provoke negative sentiment toward the opposing camp, presenting them as untrustworthy parties. Such content has the potential to reinforce negative stereotypes about opposing groups, making it increasingly difficult to build empathy and understand different perspectives. The aggressive and provocative rhetoric makes it difficult to engage in constructive dialogue. Extreme content can trigger radicalization and encourage individuals to take extreme actions.

b. Prevalence of Simple Narratives

The video screenshot in Figure 3 below is from an account where users who already have certain views will tend to seek and share content that reinforces their views, thereby further strengthening confirmation bias. From the upload date, it is evident that this content had already emerged and resonated on TikTok social media one month before the election day by simplifying the complexity of political issues into two highly contrasting choices: good or bad, right or wrong. There are no nuances, no room for differing opinions. Thus, it can be indicated that a proportion of the population was formed and possessed certain characteristics in the period before the 2024 Jakarta Regional Election.



Account	Post Date	Views	Likes	Comments	Saved	Shares
Oposan.62	28-11-2024	279,400	2654	392	131	150 times

Figure 3: "Prevalence of simple narratives" video indicator
 Source: Oposan.62 (2024), viewed January 17, 2025.

The video screenshot in Figure 3 is from an account where users who already have certain views will tend to seek and share content that reinforces their views, thereby further strengthening confirmation bias. From the upload date, it is evident that this content had already emerged and resonated on TikTok social media one month before election day by simplifying the complexity of political issues into two highly contrasting choices: good or bad, right or wrong. There are no nuances, no room for differing opinions. Thus, it can be indicated that a proportion of the population was formed and possessed certain characteristics in the period before the 2024 Jakarta Regional Election.

b. Involving Politically Charged Memes



Account	Post Date	Views	Likes	Comments	Saved	Shares
rahayuindonesia	21-10-2024	359,600	4128	930	192	90 times

Figure 4: "Involving politically charged memes" video indicator
 Source: Rahayu Indonesia (2024), viewed January 17, 2025.

Figure 4 is a video upload on TikTok social media that shows a meme displaying many banners of candidate pair 1 RK-Suswono in various places in Jakarta dominated by blue color, with the following caption:

"...You got the wrong color, sir! No matter how much you make it blue, in any corner, sorry sir, Jakarta is Orange not Blue!"
 (Text form Video on figure 4)

In this case, the video provides a caption that is sarcastic and politically states the incompatibility of Ridwan Kamil and Suswono to lead Jakarta because it does not align with the character of Jakarta's residents and the city. The indication found in this content is that it is deliberately designed to trigger negative emotions and strengthen polarization.

c. The Echo Chamber Phenomenon



Figure 5: "The echo chamber phenomenon" video indicator
 Source: Detik Inet (2024), viewed January 19, 2025.

Figure 5 shows the differences in the solutions to air pollution in Jakarta proposed by each candidate pair. While online media will neutrally broadcast these issues simultaneously, when disseminated on social media, each candidate's campaign team intentionally creates partial responses. This situation then collides with algorithms that distribute messages according to each user's individual preferences, creating an echo chamber situation on social media (Hussain & Salleh, 2024; Paidi & Hassan, 2021).

d. Polarization Among Influencers



Figure 6: "Polarization among influencers"
 Source: Adriel Viari Purba (2024), viewed November 20, 2024.

The account @adrieliaripurba owned by Adriel Viari Purba, a political influencer, lawyer, and legal and business consultant. This account has 327,400 followers and 12,600,000 likes. Account (@adrieliaripurba) in the video content we selected shows its support for candidate pair No. 1 RK-Suswono, especially with the support from former 7th President of the Republic of Indonesia Jokowi and President Prabowo. He also states that candidate pair No. 3 Pramono-Rano will have difficulty competing with candidate pair No. 1 in the 2024 Jakarta Regional Election due to his confidence in RK's 'track record' during his tenure as Mayor of Bandung and Governor of West Java.

Conversely, he says that Mr. Pramono, who has never served as an executive, is not *apple to apple* when compared to Ridwan Kamil, and is more suitable to be a cabinet secretary, assisting the president. The words used tend to be casual with a fiery tone, and are more sarcastic when addressing candidate pair No. 3. This video upload also includes a video clip from Youtube/Kompas TV, which broadcasts Jokowi's statement of support for Ridwan Kamil to become Jakarta Governor 2024. And in the comment section, there has already been a dichotomy of users supporting candidate pair No. 1 RK-Suswono and candidate pair No. 3 Pramono-Rano.

The research findings are developed within a conceptual framework that elucidates the coherent integration of the research problem focus, theoretical foundation, concepts, and methodology employed to answer the research questions and achieve the research objectives.



Figure 7: TikTok Content Polarization & Mental Health Research Flow Model
 Source: Researcher elaboration

Based on Figure 7, it can be explained that the analysis steps carried out are divided into 3 stages starting from *Screening and Filtering*, *Echo Chamber & Filter Bubble identification*, *The Influence of Algorithms on Political Polarization*, *Impact on Mental Health of Politics*, *Data Validation and Theoretical Contribution*, which can be explained as follows:

- 1) *STAGE 1: Data Screening and Filtering.* This stage focuses on collecting and selecting TikTok content relevant to the 2024 Jakarta Regional Election, with selection conducted using the following limitations:
 - *Selection Criteria* uses hashtags related to the Regional Election, for example: #PilkadaDKI2024, #JakartaMemilih, #PilkadaJakarta as primary hashtags. Focuses on the contestation between candidate pair number 1 (Ridwan Kamil - Suswono) and number 3 (Pramono Anung - Rano Karno), and excludes candidate pair number 2 because they come from an independent route and have lower electability.
 - *Data Collection Methods through Scraping:* using tools to collect video data, descriptions, comments, interactions, and *Participant Observation*, where researchers actively follow political trends on TikTok to understand discussion patterns and developing narratives.

- 2) *STAGE 2: Identification of Echo Chambers and Filter Bubbles.* This stage aims to understand how TikTok's algorithm creates echo chambers, where users are only exposed to political content that aligns with their preferences. The processes conducted are:
 - *Algorithm Analysis* by observing how TikTok's hashtag algorithm and For You Page (FYP) curate content based on user interaction history, as well as analysing the relationship between interactions (likes, shares, and comments) and the reinforcement of specific political preferences.
 - *Interaction Networks & Echo Chamber Structure.* Identifying connections between accounts, such as political influencers, candidate supporters, and partisan groups, as well as using social network analysis to examine how information spreads within specific communities.

- 3) *STAGE 3: Algorithm's Influence on Political Polarization.* This stage explores how TikTok's algorithm drives echo chambers on TikTok and contributes to increasingly sharp political polarization by using polarization indicators on polarized content.
 - *Implementation of Polarization Indicators* on content by examining the presence of factional rhetoric, prevalence of simplified narratives, involvement of politically-charged memes and challenges, echo chamber phenomena, polarization among influencers, increased negative interactions, and the spread of fabrication and misinformation.

- 4) *STAGE 4: Impact on Political Mental Health.* This stage focuses on how polarization reinforced by TikTok's algorithm impacts users' political mental health. At this stage, there is increased analysis of user interactions with polarized content.
 - *Implementation of Psychological or Mental Health Impact Indicators*, by identifying indications of stress and anxiety levels, online radicalization phenomena, reduced trust in institutional frameworks, social isolation, and online vigilante culture (online bullying).
 - *Implementation of Affective Polarization Indicators*, which are critical metrics showing emotions that increase and sharply deteriorate toward the negative as users are exposed to polarized content, by examining indications of emotional and hostile language, simplified narratives, echo chambers & filter bubbles, negative interactions and hate speech, and influencer polarization.

- *Output* obtained becomes indicators of increased social polarization to serve as mental health assessment due to political content exposure.
- 5) *STAGE 5: Data Validation and Theoretical Contribution*. In this final stage, validation is conducted through systematic triangulation to generate answers to the research problems:
- *Implications for Theory & Policy* by affirming how these findings strengthen Echo Chamber theory (Sunstein, 2018) dan *Filter Bubble* (Pariser, 2011). As well as providing a foundation for policymakers and social media regulators to consider political polarization mitigation strategies.
 - *Recommendations for Digital Literacy Enhancement*, whereby users need to be equipped with the ability to recognize algorithmic bias and diversify information sources. Then *Algorithm Regulation & Platform Transparency*, calling upon social media platforms to provide more control for users in customizing the content they consume.

Research findings regarding TikTok content's impact on the 2024 Jakarta Regional Election demonstrate that polarization occurs through several indicators in the analysed content. *Prevalence of Simplified Narratives* shows TikTok content simplifies complex political issues into binary choices, such as good or bad, right or wrong, contributing to political polarization. *Echo Chamber Phenomena* occur where users are exposed to content aligning with their views, further entrenching beliefs. *Negative Interactions and Hate Speech* are seen in content involving political figures such as Amien Rais. This content uses derogatory language to attack political opponents, intensifying negative sentiment and polarization among users. *Fabrication or Spread of Manufactured Information* is demonstrated by the 'aljadid' account, which highlights video editing to support specific political candidates, influencing public opinion and deepening divisions. This false and misleading information spread as a factor exacerbating societal polarization *Impact on Mental Health* can be observed through psychological effects of political content on TikTok users, showing that exposure to polarized political content can cause increased stress, anxiety, and hostility, as users perceive threats to their political affiliations. This connects to the broader phenomenon of online radicalization and extreme partisan narrative spread.

Political Mental Health Indicators on TikTok

The psychological well-being of TikTok users in relation to political factors can be evaluated through various metrics, as depicted in the referenced scientific articles. Stress and anxiety levels are largely determined by political involvement, illustrated by the demonstrable effects of political circumstances on American citizens' mental health during the Trump administration, with many individuals reporting increased stress, sleep disorders, and suicidal ideation from political exposure (Smith, 2022). *Affective polarization* serves as another critical metric, where emotions such as anger and fear are exacerbated by perceived threats to one's political affiliation, resulting in increased hostility toward political adversaries (Renström, Bäck, & Carroll, 2023). *Online radicalization phenomena* coupled with misinformation and extreme partisan narratives trigger stronger negative emotional responses and contribute to ideological polarization (Weismueller et al., 2023). *Diminished trust in institutional frameworks* is a direct consequence of political variables, where government policies and

ideological attitudes significantly influence individual mental health and self-confidence (Bhugra & Ventriglio, 2023). *Social isolation* can occur from the psychological burden experienced by social media users, as evidenced by the Emotional Vocabulary Index, which measures variations in mental health (Khakimova et al., 2023). Finally, *online vigilante culture* can be linked to political determinants influencing mental health, where political ideologies and governance mechanisms shape social interactions and power dynamics, potentially resulting in oppressive actions toward perceived political opposition (Bhugra & Ventriglio, 2023)]. These indicators provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the political mental health landscape prevalent on TikTok.

Affective polarization, characterized by increased hostility between political groups, has significant implications for political mental health, particularly in the context of the 2024 Jakarta Election. This phenomenon, as observed in various studies, can act as a sociopolitical stressor, negatively impacting individual health by fostering a hostile political environment, although it can simultaneously enhance political participation, which has positive, albeit smaller, effects on health (Nelson, 2022). Emotional responses to perceived intergroup threats, such as anger, further exacerbate affective polarization, causing individuals to distance themselves from opposing political parties (Renström et al., 2023). These emotional dynamics are crucial in understanding the mental health landscape during elections, as they can heighten stress and anxiety among voters.

Furthermore, preferences for politically coherent and confident individuals over those with ambiguous views suggest that political certainty can influence interpersonal likability and potentially reduce some negative effects of polarization (Zimmerman, Garbulsky, Ariely, Sigman, & Navajas, 2022). The moral dilemmas posed by affective polarization highlight how partisan bias can extend to non-political contexts, affecting decisions and interactions in daily life (Stoetzer, 2022). In Jakarta, these dynamics may manifest in increased tension and political pressure, impacting voters' mental health as they navigate a polarized electoral environment. Understanding these factors is essential for addressing potential mental health challenges associated with affective polarization in upcoming elections.

The findings of this study indicate that political polarization on TikTok leading up to the 2024 Jakarta Regional Election significantly impacts users' political mental health, particularly in the form of stress, political anxiety, and digital fatigue. Political discussions occurring on TikTok tend to reinforce ideological segregation, such that users trapped in homogeneous information environments experience difficulty accepting alternative perspectives, ultimately increasing emotional tension and feelings of alienation in the digital public sphere. The machine learning-based recommendation system on the For You Page (FYP) optimizes user engagement by presenting content that aligns with their interaction patterns, which in turn narrows access to diverse political perspectives. Consequently, users who are continuously exposed to the same narratives experience reinforcement of extreme attitudes, as well as increased cognitive and emotional burden due to their involvement in prolonged political conflicts on this platform.

To measure the impact of political polarization on the political mental health of TikTok users, this study identifies several key indicators. First, the level of *political stress*, which can be measured through feelings of tension and anxiety that arise from excessive exposure to political content. Second, *echo chamber entrapment*, which can be identified through the low diversity of information consumed by users and the level of intolerance toward different perspectives. Third, *digital burnout*, which refers to mental fatigue resulting from intense engagement in political discussions on social media, characterized by increased feelings of

saturation, frustration, or even withdrawal from digital activities related to politics. Fourth, *affective polarization*, which refers to increased negative sentiment toward opposing political groups as well as the tendency to reject compromise or constructive dialogue. Using these indicators, further research can develop a more holistic model for understanding the relationship between political content consumption on TikTok, polarization, and its impact on the political mental health of digital society.

This study offers a new contribution to the field of political communication and media psychology by highlighting TikTok as a primary arena in political polarization leading up to the 2024 Jakarta Regional Election and its implications for users' political mental health. Unlike previous studies that have focused more extensively on platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, this research examines how TikTok's algorithm based on the For You Page (FYP) shapes unique patterns of political exposure that potentially accelerate polarization. With its short-form video format, visual and emotional interactions, and stitch and duet features that enable direct political responses, TikTok creates discourse dynamics that are faster, more personal, and often more confrontational than other social media platforms.

The novelty of this research also lies in its interdisciplinary approach that combines political communication analysis with media psychology perspectives, particularly in exploring the relationship between polarized political content consumption and mental health indicators such as political anxiety, stress, and political fatigue. By understanding how TikTok's algorithm influences users' psychological experiences in the context of electoral politics, this study not only contributes to theoretical realm but also has practical implications for various stakeholders. The findings from this study can serve as a foundation for regulators and social media platforms in designing more adaptive policies to mitigate the negative impacts of political polarization on societal mental well-being. Furthermore, this research can provide insights for political actors and communication practitioners in developing more ethical and inclusive digital political communication strategies.

Therefore, this research possesses strong theoretical and practical value, both in filling gaps in existing literature and in providing a foundation for more evidence-based policy-making. Amid increasing global attention to the impact of social media on mental health, particularly in political contexts, this study makes a significant contribution to understanding the dynamics of political polarization in the digital era and the challenges it poses for society's political mental health. Echo chamber theory gains new significance on short-form video platforms like TikTok, where algorithm-driven content creates more immersive political echo chambers through visual and auditory stimuli. This study examines how TikTok's For You Page recommendation system facilitates political echo chamber formation during the 2024 Jakarta Gubernatorial Election and intensifies psychological impacts on users. The research addresses a critical gap by analysing polarization mechanisms on TikTok while identifying mitigation strategies to reduce adverse effects on political mental health. By integrating echo chamber theory with political psychology, this study demonstrates how algorithmic content curation contributes to political fragmentation in digital spaces.

CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates that TikTok users, leading up to the 2024 Jakarta Regional Election, inadvertently become trapped in echo chambers, where their exposure to political discourse is progressively limited to narratives aligning with preexisting preferences. TikTok's algorithm assumes a critical function in content curation based on users' engagement history,

ultimately restricting opportunities for individuals to encounter diverse political perspectives. Furthermore, political influencers and partisan participants proactively exploit TikTok's interactive features, such as duet and stitch, to reinforce collective bias by promoting narratives entrenched within their communities. Interviews conducted with TikTok users reveal that political discourse on this platform tends to be insular and less receptive to differing opinions, further reinforcing polarization in the digital realm.

The results validate the assertion that platform algorithms play a crucial role in fostering an increasingly fragmented digital political landscape, where individuals find themselves shrouded in homogeneous information pockets. From a practical perspective, this research offers valuable insights for digital media regulators and policymakers, urging them to contemplate strategies for mitigating polarization effects exacerbated by algorithms, such as implementing more equitable content recommendation frameworks and promoting more inclusive political dialogue within social media environments.

Nevertheless, this research presents several limitations requiring acknowledgment. The primary constraint relates to limited access to TikTok's algorithmic data, which impedes more in-depth examination of mechanisms by which the recommendation system contributes to echo chamber formation. Furthermore, this study primarily employs qualitative methodology through content analysis and comprehensive interviews, lacking quantitative assessment of political exposure effects on users. Therefore, further research integrating quantitative methodology alongside enhanced access to algorithmic data could yield more holistic understanding of echo chamber dynamics within TikTok and their implications for political polarization and users' political mental well-being.

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