



## Original Article

### Voter Behavior and Social Media Influence: A Case Study of Indonesia's 2024 General Election

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#### Abstract:

This study investigates the influence of social media on voter behavior during Indonesia's 2024 General Election. Through a qualitative research approach, the study employs semi-structured interviews to gather insights from 30 participants, including voters, social media influencers, and political analysts. The sampling techniques used were purposive and snowball sampling, ensuring a diverse range of respondents actively engaged in political discourse on platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. The research identified two key themes: (1) the democratizing potential of social media, which increases political participation, gives marginalized groups a voice, and facilitates direct engagement between voters and political figures, and (2) the negative consequences of algorithmic biases and the spread of misinformation. These biases contribute to the formation of echo chambers, where users are only exposed to content that aligns with their pre-existing beliefs, and misinformation that undermines public trust in the electoral process. The findings highlight social media's dual role as a tool for enhancing democratic engagement while simultaneously posing significant risks. The study recommends fostering algorithmic transparency, promoting digital literacy programs to help users critically evaluate information, and implementing stronger measures to combat the spread of misinformation. These steps are essential for ensuring that social media remains a positive force in the democratic process while addressing the challenges that can weaken public trust and electoral integrity.

**Keywords:** Social Media Influence, Voter Behavior, Misinformation, Algorithmic Bias, Political Engagement

#### Introduction

Social media has become a dominant force in shaping how individuals engage with information, interact with others, and form political opinions. Over the past decade, digital platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram have dramatically transformed political discourse, facilitating unprecedented levels of accessibility and engagement in electoral processes (Benkler, 2006; Castells, 2009). In many countries,



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including Indonesia, these platforms have evolved into crucial tools for political communication, offering candidates and voters alike an interactive space for disseminating information and participating in debates ([Kemp, 2023](#)). Social media has thus become a vital element of contemporary elections, reshaping the way campaigns are run and how voters make decisions.

The 2024 Indonesian General Election presents an important case study for examining the role of social media in political engagement. Indonesia is a nation where digital engagement is rapidly increasing, with over 191 million active internet users and widespread access to social media ([Kemp, 2023](#)). Social media platforms are expected to serve as key battlegrounds for political influence during the election, allowing political candidates to bypass traditional media gatekeepers and engage directly with voters. These platforms also offer voters a space to participate in public debates, voice their opinions, and share content that reflects their political beliefs ([Tufano et al., 2023](#)).

Despite these benefits, social media's influence on elections is not without challenges. The very features that make social media powerful tools for political engagement—such as the ability to reach large audiences quickly—also facilitate the spread of misinformation. In particular, platforms like Facebook and Twitter have been criticized for their role in amplifying false or misleading information, which can distort public perceptions and undermine the integrity of democratic processes ([Vosoughi et al., 2018](#)). The rapid dissemination of misinformation on these platforms often outpaces efforts to fact-check and correct false claims, leading to widespread confusion among voters ([Sunstein, 2017](#)). In addition, social media platforms use algorithms that prioritize emotionally charged content, which can exacerbate political polarization by reinforcing pre-existing beliefs and creating echo chambers where users are exposed only to viewpoints that align with their own ([Tufekci, 2015](#)).

Furthermore, the role of algorithms in shaping what content users see raises concerns about the fairness and transparency of the electoral process. Social media algorithms are designed to maximize engagement by promoting content that generates strong emotional reactions, often privileging sensationalist or extreme viewpoints over more balanced and informative content ([Tufano et al., 2023](#)). This selective exposure to information can skew public understanding of important issues and contribute to a polarized political landscape where meaningful dialogue is replaced by partisan conflict. In the context of the 2024 Indonesian election, the implications of these dynamics are particularly significant, as political parties and candidates increasingly rely on social media to shape public opinion and mobilize voters.

The objective of this research is to explore the impact of social media on voter behavior during Indonesia's 2024 General Election. Specifically, this study examines how social media platforms influence political engagement, shape public opinion, and contribute to the spread of misinformation. By analyzing these factors, the research seeks to provide insights into the dual role of social media as both a democratizing force and a source of potential harm in electoral processes.

The novelty of this research lies in its focus on Indonesia's unique digital and political landscape. While much of the existing literature on social media and elections has focused on Western democracies, this study offers new insights into how these platforms function in emerging economies. Indonesia's high levels of social media penetration and its diverse electorate provide a rich context for examining how digital platforms influence voter behavior in a developing democracy. This research contributes to the growing body of knowledge on social media's role in politics by highlighting the

specific challenges and opportunities that these platforms present in non-Western electoral contexts.

Methods

This research was conducted to explore how social media influences public opinion during Indonesia’s 2024 General Election. A qualitative method with an interpretivism approach was used to capture the lived experiences of various participants engaged with political discourse on social media platforms (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Moleong, 2017a, 2017b). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with individuals from different regions of Indonesia, including voters, social media influencers, and political analysts. Two sampling techniques were used: purposive sampling and snowball sampling.

Profile of the Sample

Data collection began with an exploratory survey, resulting in the recruitment of 70 participants. From this, a final sample of 30 respondents was selected using purposive sampling based on specific criteria (Braun & Clarke, 2012; Sugiyono, 2013). The selection criteria included:

- 1. Availability: Respondents who were available during the interview period.
- 2. Age Group: Participants were between 18 and 45 years of age.
- 3. Social Media Engagement: Participants were active users of social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.
- 4. Interview Method: The final sample included 15 participants who provided detailed insights through interviews. The characteristics of the respondents are outlined in Table 1.

Table 1. Sample Characteristics

| Characteristic         |                          | Details | Count (N=30) |
|------------------------|--------------------------|---------|--------------|
| Age                    | 18-24                    |         | 8            |
|                        | 25-34                    |         | 12           |
|                        | 35-45                    |         | 10           |
| Gender                 | Male                     |         | 18           |
|                        | Female                   |         | 12           |
| Occupation             | Voters                   |         | 12           |
|                        | Social Media Influencers |         | 8            |
|                        | Political Analysts       |         | 10           |
| Region                 | Java (Jakarta, Surabaya) |         | 14           |
|                        | Sumatra                  |         | 5            |
|                        | Bali                     |         | 4            |
|                        | Kalimantan               |         | 7            |
| Social Media Platforms | Twitter                  |         | 26           |
|                        | Instagram                |         | 22           |
|                        | Facebook                 |         | 18           |

Design of the Interviews

Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format, allowing respondents to provide open-ended answers while remaining within the boundaries of the research topic ([Sugiyono, 2013](#)). A total of 15 participants were interviewed online using platforms such as Zoom and Google Meet, with each session lasting between 1 hour and 2 hours. The interview questions focused on how social media influenced the participants' political opinions, their exposure to misinformation, and their engagement with political content during the election period.

### Procedure of Analysis

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, a widely accepted method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns within qualitative data ([Arnold, 2006](#)). The process of thematic analysis followed six stages ([Braun & Clarke, 2012](#)):

1. **Understanding the Data:** The first stage involved becoming familiar with the data by reading and re-reading the interview transcripts. This step helped to identify interesting ideas and connections between the data and existing literature.
2. **Initial Code Identification:** In this stage, the data were broken down into manageable segments, which were then labeled with codes. These codes were based on key ideas or recurring topics from the interviews.
3. **Theme Identification:** After identifying initial codes, the data were grouped into broader themes that encapsulated key insights from the interviews ([Siyoto & Sodik, 2015](#)).
4. **Reviewing Themes:** The researcher then reviewed the identified themes to ensure they were coherent and relevant to the research objectives. Themes were evaluated for their consistency across different interviews.
5. **Defining and Naming Themes:** The researcher assigned clear labels to the themes to reflect their overall meaning and significance. This stage involved a detailed explanation of each theme to ensure clarity.
6. **Reporting:** Finally, the themes were reported, supported by quotes from the interviewees, to provide evidence of the findings. This stage involved presenting a narrative based on the themes that emerged from the data.

### Results

Based on the data collected from several participants, the research identified two primary themes: (1) The Democratizing Potential of Social Media in Political Engagement, which includes three sub-themes: Expanded Political Participation, Amplification of Marginalized Voices, and Real-Time Interaction with Political Figures; and (2) The Negative Consequences of Algorithmic Biases and Misinformation, comprising three sub-themes: Creation of Echo Chambers, Misinformation Proliferation, and Erosion of Trust in the Electoral Process.

#### Theme 1: The Democratizing Potential of Social Media

Social media platforms have democratized access to political discourse by giving individuals the power to participate in political conversations and engage directly with candidates. Several participants described how platforms like Twitter and Instagram allowed them to have their voices heard in a way that was previously unavailable through traditional media channels. Three main findings emerged: (1) Expanded Political Participation, (2) Amplification of Marginalized Voices, and (3) Real-Time Interaction with Political Figures.

#### Expanded Political Participation

Social media platforms enable greater political participation by providing voters with easy access to information and the ability to engage in discussions on political issues. Participants highlighted that social media gave them the ability to engage in political discourse, especially during the lead-up to the 2024 Indonesian General Election. Respondent A1 noted: *"Before social media, I never really participated in politics, but now I feel like I have a voice. I can join discussions on Twitter and see what others are saying."* (Informant A1, Male, 28 Years).

This response illustrates the democratizing potential of social media by making political engagement more accessible to a larger audience, including those who were previously disengaged from the political process.

#### Amplification of Marginalized Voices

Social media has also amplified the voices of marginalized groups who are often excluded from mainstream media. Several respondents emphasized how social media allows individuals from underrepresented communities to express their views and be heard. Respondent B2 mentioned: *"I come from a rural area, and we don't have much representation in the media. But on Facebook, I can share my thoughts on the election, and people listen."* (Informant B2, Female, 34 Years).

This sub-theme reflects the ability of social media to level the playing field, giving everyone a platform to participate in political discussions regardless of their background or location.

#### Real-Time Interaction with Political Figures

Another significant benefit of social media is the direct interaction between voters and political candidates. Several participants reported that they appreciated being able to engage with politicians through social media, which was not possible through traditional channels like television or newspapers. Respondent C1 explained: *"I tweeted at a candidate, and they responded. It made me feel like my opinion mattered and that the politicians are listening to us."* (Informant C1, Male, 23 Years).

This ability to engage directly with political figures in real time is seen as a key benefit of social media, enhancing the overall democratic process by promoting dialogue between voters and candidates.

#### Theme 2: The Negative Consequences of Algorithmic Biases and Misinformation

Despite the democratizing potential of social media, several negative consequences emerged from the interviews, particularly related to algorithmic biases and misinformation. Three primary issues were identified: (1) Creation of Echo Chambers, (2) Misinformation Proliferation, and (3) Erosion of Trust in the Electoral Process.

##### Creation of Echo Chambers

The first issue raised by participants was the creation of echo chambers, where social media algorithms tend to reinforce users' pre-existing beliefs by showing them content that aligns with their views. Several respondents expressed concern about the lack of exposure to differing opinions. Respondent D3 shared: *"It feels like the more I engage with political content, the more the algorithm shows me things I already agree with. I don't see much content that challenges my views."* (Informant D3, Female, 30 Years).

This response highlights how social media can contribute to political polarization by limiting exposure to diverse perspectives, creating an environment where users are surrounded by like-minded opinions.

### Misinformation Proliferation

Misinformation was a recurring concern among participants. Many respondents mentioned encountering false information or conspiracy theories about the 2024 General Election on platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp. Respondent B4 remarked: *"I saw so many fake news stories about the candidates, especially on WhatsApp. It was hard to know what was true anymore."* (Informant B4, Male, 29 Years).

Participants expressed frustration with the ease with which misinformation spreads on social media and the difficulty in distinguishing fact from fiction, which they felt could negatively influence voter behavior.

### Erosion of Trust in the Electoral Process

The final sub-theme that emerged was the erosion of trust in the electoral process due to the spread of misinformation. Participants expressed concern that false information circulating on social media undermined their confidence in the integrity of the election. Respondent C2 explained: *"I don't know what to believe anymore because so much false information is shared online. It's making me doubt the whole election process."* (Informant C2, Female, 32 Years).

This highlights the detrimental effect that misinformation can have on public trust in the democratic process, further complicating the role of social media in political engagement.

## Discussion

### The Role of Social Media in Amplifying Public Opinion

The dual role of social media in influencing public opinion during elections cannot be understated. While social media platforms have democratized political discourse, they also contribute to challenges such as the spread of misinformation and algorithmic biases. The findings of this study suggest that while social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook provide valuable opportunities for political engagement, they also pose significant risks that can affect voter behavior and trust in the electoral process ([Benkler, 2006](#); [Castells, 2009](#)).

Social media's ability to give voice to underrepresented groups and empower individuals to participate in political conversations is a major advantage ([Sunstein, 2017](#)). However, the downside is the risk of content being filtered through algorithms that reinforce pre-existing beliefs, creating echo chambers that deepen political polarization. This phenomenon is supported by previous research showing that algorithms tend to curate content that aligns with users' preferences, thus limiting exposure to diverse viewpoints ([Tufekci, 2015](#); [Retkowsky et al., 2023](#)). This reinforces the need to address algorithmic transparency in order to prevent the reinforcement of biased political views and misinformation.

### Challenges of Misinformation and Echo Chambers

The spread of misinformation was a key concern among participants, which aligns with the findings of Vosoughi et al. (2018), who highlight how false information spreads faster on social media than truthful content. Participants in this study reported encountering misleading information that was difficult to verify, contributing to a decline in trust in the political process. This reflects a broader global trend, where misinformation not only impacts voter behavior but also erodes public confidence in the democratic system ([Poulston, 2015](#); [Gagnon et al., 2023](#)).

The creation of echo chambers exacerbates this problem. As seen in previous studies, social media algorithms prioritize content that users engage with, which tends to

confirm their pre-existing beliefs ([Sunstein, 2017](#); [Mooney, 2016](#)). This leads to a limited exposure to opposing viewpoints and reinforces ideological divides, as evidenced by several participants who reported rarely encountering political perspectives that differed from their own. This finding highlights the critical need for social media platforms to develop more transparent algorithms that encourage the exposure of diverse political content ([Tufano et al., 2023](#)).

### Impact on Voter Behavior and Political Participation

The democratizing potential of social media is reflected in its capacity to enhance political participation, particularly among younger voters. Participants reported feeling more connected to the political process through platforms like Twitter, which allowed them to interact directly with political candidates and participate in political discussions. This finding is consistent with research by Lee & Ruck (2022), who suggest that social media platforms create new spaces for political engagement, especially for individuals who may not have been involved in traditional forms of political participation.

However, the increase in political participation facilitated by social media comes with risks. Participants acknowledged that while social media enabled them to engage in political discourse, it also exposed them to misinformation that could negatively influence their decisions. These concerns align with the literature on how misinformation can skew voter perceptions and impact electoral outcomes ([Vosoughi et al., 2018](#); [Popa et al., 2023](#)). The challenge, therefore, lies in finding ways to preserve the positive aspects of social media engagement while mitigating the risks associated with the spread of false information.

### Algorithmic Transparency and User Education

One of the key findings of this study is the role that algorithmic biases play in shaping political behavior on social media platforms. The study participants expressed concerns about how algorithms selectively present content based on past interactions, which can create echo chambers and deepen political polarization ([Tufekci, 2015](#); [Sunstein, 2017](#)). This finding underscores the need for greater transparency in how social media algorithms function and how they influence the information users are exposed to during election periods.

In addition to improving algorithmic transparency, this study also points to the importance of user education. Participants emphasized the need for better digital literacy programs to help voters distinguish between credible and false information. This is consistent with the recommendations of previous research, which advocates for comprehensive digital literacy initiatives as a way to equip social media users with the tools they need to navigate the complexities of the digital information landscape ([Liu-Lastres et al., 2023](#); [Korstjens & Moser, 2018](#)). Educating users about how algorithms work and how misinformation spreads on social media could empower them to critically assess the content they encounter online.

### Implications for Policymakers and Social Media Platforms

This study highlights several important implications for policymakers and social media platforms. First, policymakers must take steps to regulate the spread of misinformation on social media platforms, particularly during election periods. This can be achieved through stricter content moderation policies and the implementation of more robust fact-checking mechanisms ([Dogru et al., 2023](#)). Second, social media companies must work to improve algorithmic transparency, allowing users to understand how their content is curated and ensuring that they are exposed to a

balanced range of viewpoints.

Moreover, the introduction of user education programs focused on digital literacy will be crucial in reducing the negative impacts of misinformation and algorithmic biases. Empowering users to critically assess the information they encounter online could help mitigate the risks posed by echo chambers and misinformation (Lee, 2021). These measures are essential for ensuring that social media continues to serve as a positive force in the democratic process, rather than a tool for the dissemination of false information.

#### Future Research Directions

While this study provides important insights into the role of social media in shaping public opinion during elections, further research is needed to explore the long-term effects of social media on political polarization. Future studies could focus on how social media platforms adapt to the challenges posed by misinformation and algorithmic biases, particularly in the context of elections. Additionally, comparative studies that examine how social media influences elections in different political and cultural contexts could provide a more comprehensive understanding of its impact on global democratic processes.

#### Conclusion

The findings of this study reveal the complex role of social media in shaping public opinion during the 2024 Indonesian General Election. Through an examination of voter and influencer perceptions, it is clear that social media platforms serve as powerful tools for political engagement, but they also introduce significant risks. The democratizing potential of social media is evident in its ability to increase political participation, amplify marginalized voices, and foster direct interaction between voters and political candidates. However, these benefits are tempered by challenges related to the spread of misinformation, the creation of echo chambers, and the influence of algorithmic biases. Misinformation poses a critical threat to the integrity of the electoral process, as false narratives can mislead voters and erode trust in democratic institutions. Additionally, the role of algorithms in shaping political discourse can reinforce pre-existing biases, limiting exposure to diverse viewpoints and contributing to political polarization. These factors highlight the precarious balance between social media's ability to facilitate democratic engagement and its potential to undermine it through the proliferation of biased or false information.

The precariousness of social media's influence on elections is rooted in the platforms' structure and the wider socio-political environment. While social media enables widespread political participation, it also creates vulnerabilities that need to be addressed by both policymakers and platform developers. To mitigate these risks, it is essential to enhance transparency in social media algorithms, develop stronger misinformation countermeasures, and promote digital literacy among users. Furthermore, fostering an inclusive digital environment where diverse political perspectives can coexist is critical to ensuring that social media continues to support healthy democratic discourse. Based on these findings, this study suggests that addressing the challenges posed by social media requires a multifaceted approach. This includes regulatory reforms, the promotion of algorithmic transparency, and the implementation of educational programs aimed at improving users' ability to critically assess information online. Only through such comprehensive efforts can the positive aspects of social media be harnessed while minimizing its potential to

disrupt the democratic process.

### Suggestion

Based on the findings of this study, several measures are recommended to address the challenges posed by social media in shaping public opinion during elections. Firstly, improving the transparency of social media algorithms is essential. Social media platforms should implement clearer policies regarding how content is curated and ensure that users are exposed to diverse political perspectives rather than being confined to echo chambers. This will help mitigate the risks of political polarization caused by algorithmic biases. Secondly, it is crucial to strengthen efforts to combat misinformation. Social media platforms should adopt more robust content moderation practices and collaborate with fact-checking organizations to reduce the spread of false information. Policymakers are also encouraged to introduce regulatory frameworks that hold platforms accountable for the dissemination of harmful or misleading content, especially during sensitive periods like elections.

In addition, promoting digital literacy among users is vital. Educational programs should be developed to help users critically assess the information they encounter online, equipping them with the skills to identify credible sources and detect misinformation. These initiatives should target not only younger users but also older generations who may be more vulnerable to false information circulating on platforms like WhatsApp and Facebook. Finally, fostering an environment that encourages civic engagement on social media is recommended. Platforms should support open and inclusive political discussions by ensuring that their policies do not disproportionately silence marginalized voices. By taking these steps, social media companies and policymakers can work together to create a more balanced and trustworthy digital space that promotes informed public discourse and supports democratic processes.

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