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Political parties, communication strategies, and public opinion after the 2024 regional elections

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ABSTRACT

BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES: Political parties played a strategic role in preparing and promoting candidates for the 2024 regional head elections in Indonesia, which were held nine months after the presidential election. The political dynamics from the presidential contest were expected to influence public perception and candidate selection at the regional level. This study examined the role and political communication strategies employed by political parties to promote their cadres in the 2024 regional elections.

METHODS: This research adopted a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative methods—interviews, observations, and literature studies—with quantitative analysis through surveys distributed to 117 respondents across West Java. The qualitative component explored communication patterns and internal strategies, while the quantitative component measured public opinion and media preferences.

FINDINGS: The survey results revealed that 42.7% of respondents supported PKS, followed by Gerindra (16.2%), PDIP (10.3%), Golkar (8.5%), and PKB (6%). Social media was the most utilized political communication channel, with 76.9% of respondents accessing messages through Instagram (61.5%) and TikTok (14.5%). Most political parties preferred to promote native cadres and conducted face-to-face campaigns in addition to digital outreach. The data showed that message consistency and community proximity were key variables influencing voter trust.

CONCLUSION: Political parties in West Java employed relatively similar communication strategies, integrating both digital and conventional media channels. Despite the proximity of the presidential election, its residual effects on public opinion during the regional elections appeared limited, due to the overlapping coalitions among parties. Internal cadre strengthening and social media engagement were pivotal in shaping favorable public perceptions.

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INTRODUCTION

Background of the study

Political parties have a central role in the democratic process, especially in formulating state policies and determining leadership figures at various levels, from national to regional (Fraccaroli et al., 2022). Since the 1998 political reform, direct elections of regional heads have become one of the important milestones in Indonesia's democratic journey. This election not only opens up space for the involvement of the wider community in determining their regional leaders but also emphasizes the strategic role of political parties in selecting and nominating candidates who are considered capable of leading the region according to the aspirations of the community (Kristiyanto et al., 2023). As part of the implementation of the 2024 simultaneous regional elections, political parties are expected to be able to screen prospective leaders who have vision, integrity, and can answer increasingly complex local and national challenges. Political communication conducted by political parties is one of the key instruments in the selection and socialization process of prospective regional leaders (Akyuz, 2024).

Problem statement

Political communication is one of the keys to success for the party as an articulation institution for the political organization of the community, through which the community is expected to become a dialogical bridge, a channel for people's aspirations, and ideas to be poured into programs offered during the election campaign (Baraybar-Fernández et al., 2023). Windeleshm (1972) states that political communication is the delivery of political messages that are deliberately carried out by communicators to communicants to make communicants behave in certain ways. In the era of fast-paced information, political parties utilize various platforms, ranging from mass media to social media to Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology to influence public opinion (Maximova & Lukyanova, 2020). By utilizing these various channels, political parties attempt to build a positive image of their candidates, as well as create a medium to accommodate the aspirations of their constituents (Magdaci et al., 2022). This shows that political communication is a fairly effective way of shaping the public perception of prospective leaders, which has an impact on the determination of

people's political choices (Antypas et al., 2023). This is particularly evident among Indonesian voters who increasingly rely on social media as a major source of political information. Although the role of political parties in shaping public opinion and promoting prospective leaders is very significant, reality shows that there is a gap between expectations and reality in the selection of regional leaders. The hope is that political parties can produce leaders who have a good track record, integrity, and popularity, and are able to bring positive changes. But in reality, the figures that emerge are often chosen based on their popularity alone or even due to considerations of political pragmatism, not because of their quality as a leader (Al Izzati et al., 2024). This has created a gap between people's expectations of ideal leaders and the figures that emerge. This gap is one of the focuses in the formulation of this research problem.

- 1) How do political parties, through their political communication, play a role in producing qualified regional leaders?
- 2) How does party-political communication shape public opinion regarding regional leader candidates after the 2024 elections?"

This question arises as a response to the phenomenon where political communication is often used not to promote the substantial quality of candidates, but to strengthen electability based on image strategies alone.

Literature review

Based on the above problem, this section reviews previous studies on political communication theory, the role of political parties in Indonesia's democratic context, and recent developments in post-election public opinion research. In addition, previous studies have focused more on the strategic aspects of political communication, such as how political parties create candidate images or design campaigns. However, this research offers novelty by examining how interactions between political parties and the public can shape a more holistic public perception of prospective leaders. The political world needs as much support as possible to succeed a party or candidate; the main key in the process is the extent to which the interaction is carried out; that is the main essence of political communication strategy (Papakyriakopoulos et al., 2019). One of the political communication strategies used is political marketing (Ediraras et al., 2013). Through marketing activities such as advertisements

and promotions, information and knowledge will be easily disseminated by the contestants (Arofah & Nugrahajati, 2014). Political marketing is carried out by involving TV, radio, newspapers, and pamphlets that need to be delivered to the public. Meaning in interactional political communication is not fixed. Instead, meaning is formed from the continuous interaction between the sender and receiver of the message. For example, a campaign promise delivered by a prospective leader can be perceived differently by various groups of people. In delivering political messages, persuasion strategies are used as a technique for delivering messages through campaigns, propaganda, and raising public opinion. Persuasion strategy is a tool used by organized groups to reach individuals who are psychologically manipulated and incorporated into the organization (Safiullah *et al.*, 2017). "The interactional political communication model describes political communication as a dynamic process in which meaning is formed through interactions between the sender and receiver of the message (Antir *et al.*, 2024). Nowadays, people are used to seeing banners, advertisements, and various types of political communication methods from political parties ahead of regional head elections (Glate *et al.*, 2024; Kübler *et al.*, 2025). Along the roads, both in urban areas and on village roads, are full of banners of candidates from political parties. In addition, political activities such as mass gatherings and political campaigns, open debates and discussions both online and offline, which in the end all of these actions will form perceptions in the eyes of the community. Audiences interpret these actions based on their social and political context. In political communication, this interpretation process is key to understanding how political messages influence public opinion and shape perceptions of potential leaders or political parties.

Theoretical framework

This research is based on saturation theory, and its novelty mostly lies in its concept of an interactional political communication model. Political communication in this study is imagined as a two-way process; one that does not only mean sending messages from parties but the transmission of meaning and formation of perception through parties-public symbolic interactions. This model also enables research to study more sophisticated communication

dynamics, such as how the symbols, messages, and actions of political parties are interpreted by citizens. Unlike linear models that assume communication runs in one direction, this model emphasizes the non-systemic and non-linear nature, where the meaning of messages continues to develop based on interactions between individuals or groups. The function of political communication is a political structure that absorbs various aspirations, views, and ideas that develop in society and channels them as material in determining policies. Thus, the function of bringing the flow of information back from the community to the government and the government to the community. In the political context, messages conveyed by prospective leaders or political parties are not taken for granted but are interpreted according to the social, cultural, and political background of the audience. Political communication in a political party is a link for all information or messages, both verbal and nonverbal, to the wider community and members of the political party itself (Falkenberg *et al.*, 2024). One of the main concepts in this model is self and other, which refers to the active role of the sender and receiver of the message. Political communicators, such as leadership candidates not only convey messages, but also build a self-image that the audience wants to accept. Conversely, the audience, which consists of people with diverse backgrounds, not only receives messages passively but also interprets them according to their experience and understanding. In this case, political parties also function to discuss and disseminate plans and policies that will be carried out (Arranz *et al.*, 2024). This shows that political meaning is contextual and can change depending on the situation and interactions that take place. Furthermore, meaning in political communication always pursues public opinion, because it is an early indication of public perception of the figure. Public perception is an accumulation of image-building activities managed in public relations management (Gesualdi, 2018). Symbols also play an important role in this model. In political communication, symbols such as slogans, logos, or body language have active and reflective meanings. These symbols help build an image and a political message that is easier to understand, although the interpretation remains variable depending on the audience. Therefore, the same political symbol can be interpreted differently by different groups of people. These symbols in the

media as a political communication process become one of the points where the process of forming political leadership of a prospective leader takes place more complexly. To visualize the theoretical relationships described above, this study develops a conceptual framework that illustrates how political communication operates as an interactional process between political parties and the public. The model emphasizes the two-way, dynamic exchange of meaning, showing how symbolic messages—such as narratives, images, and gestures—shape citizens' perceptions of leadership and public opinion in the post-election context. Fig. 1 below illustrates the interactional political communication model and its influence on voter perception.

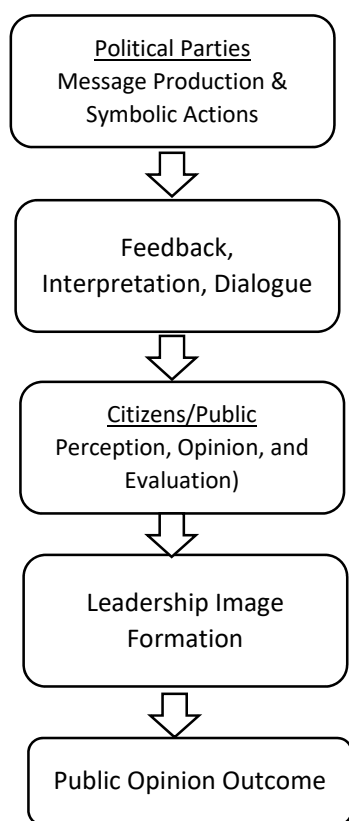


Fig. 1: Conceptual Framework of Interactional Political Communication

This framework illustrates a reciprocal communication loop where political parties act as message senders and citizens as active interpreters. Through continuous symbolic interactions, meanings are co-constructed, leading to public perceptions that shape the legitimacy

and image of regional leadership. The arrows indicate dynamic feedback and non-linear interpretation processes, consistent with the interactional model of political communication (Antir et al., 2024).

Research objectives and questions

Building upon the theoretical framework, this study focuses on understanding how political parties use interactional political communication to shape public perception and voter decisions in Indonesia's post-2024 regional election context. Political communication in this research is conceptualized as a two-way process involving the exchange of meaning between parties and citizens through symbols, messages, and social interactions. Accordingly, the objectives of this study are to:

1. *Analyze the communication patterns and strategies used by political parties in shaping public perception of regional leadership after the 2024 elections.*
2. *Explore how symbolic and interactional political messages influence voters' perceptions and decision-making processes.*

Through this analysis, the study aims to provide insights into how interactive and dialogical communication can strengthen the democratic function of political parties and promote more informed and participatory political engagement in Indonesia.

Significance of the study

This research contributes to the understanding of political communication in Indonesia's post-election context, particularly how parties manage meaning through symbolic and dialogical engagement with citizens. The findings are expected to inform:

1. *Academia, by strengthening models of interactional political communication;*
2. *Political practitioners, by identifying effective strategies to balance image politics and substantive political education;*
3. *Policy and governance, by promoting ethical, participatory, and transparent leadership formation in regional contexts.*

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research design

This study employs a mixed-methods design, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches to examine the phenomenon of political communi-

cation and the role of political parties in determining regional leadership candidates ahead of the 2024 elections in West Java. Qualitative research observes people in their environment interacting, by trying to understand the language and interpretation of the object being studied in the surrounding world (Creswell, 2002). This method allows researchers to explore the factors that influence the political communication process and party behavior in selecting prospective leaders. Qualitative research is conducted in natural conditions, where the researcher acts as the main instrument to observe and collect data directly from the field. With an exploratory and descriptive approach, this research seeks to map the problem in depth and explore the causes that influence the political process.

Participants and sampling

An inductive approach is used in this research, where the researcher concludes findings based on data and facts collected in the field. This induction process starts from the collection of general information, which is then analyzed to form more specific conclusions related to the role of political parties in determining regional leader figures. Through this method, researchers can describe and understand broader political interactions and find relevant patterns and relationships between political communication and the creation of public opinion. The research subjects consisted of key informants who were political party leaders at the central and regional levels, as well as additional informants such as politicians and community leaders. The key informants in this research are the key informants in this research included Informant A (PKS leader), Informant B (PDIP representative), and Informant C (NasDem official), each holding leadership roles at the regional level.

Instruments and data collection

In this case, the researcher limits the informants in purpose of obtaining data and informants that can be accounted for, comprehensive, precise, and accurate. Informants consist of representatives of the top 9 political parties in Indonesia. Primary data was collected through observation and in-depth interviews with these informants. There are several methods in data collection carried out in qualitative research, namely: First, interviews are a means of rechecking or verifying information or information

previously obtained. The interview technique used in qualitative research is the in-depth interview, which is the process of obtaining information for research purposes with questions and answers while meeting face to face between the interviewer and the informant or interviewee, with or without using an interview guide, where the interviewer and informant are involved in a relatively long social life (Creswell, 2007). In addition, quantitative data were obtained from 117 respondents from West Java through a survey distributed online. Secondary data were obtained from institutional documents, scientific journals, and relevant references on political communication and the role of parties in selecting leaders.

Validity and reliability

The aspects of communication studied include symbols and forms of verbal and nonverbal communication used by political parties in the selection process of the regional head leader. The data collection process uses a thick description technique, which emphasizes a detailed description of the phenomenon under study. This technique provides an in-depth understanding of the political communication process, especially in the interaction of political parties with the community and prospective regional leaders (Moleong, 2000). With in-depth interviews with each informant, the data that will be obtained is actual data, and researchers can directly confirm it by asking for validity directly to the informant (source triangulation). In addition, observation and interview methods allow researchers to directly capture the dynamics of communication and decision-making within political parties related to the 2024 elections. Data analysis was conducted through six stages, namely: organizing data, generalizing themes, coding data, applying themes and categories, looking for alternative explanations, and compiling research reports. Each stage aims to identify the main themes and patterns of political communication that exist, as well as explain the political realities faced by parties in choosing the figures of regional head candidates. The results of this analysis are organized systematically to produce a comprehensive understanding of the role of political parties in the 2024 regional elections in West Java.

Ethical considerations

This study was reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Committee of Universitas Padjadjaran,

Bandung, under approval number 1178/UN6.KEP/EC/2024. All research procedures complied with the ethical principles of social science research, ensuring the protection of participants' rights, welfare, and privacy. Each participant received an informed consent form detailing the purpose of the study, voluntary participation, and their right to withdraw at any stage without consequence. Data were collected only in public and permitted settings. Personal identifiers were removed during transcription, and all data were stored securely in accordance with the University's ethical guidelines. At the conclusion of the research, a final report will be submitted to the Research Ethics Committee, as required by the approval letter.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Coding and theme generation

Data from interviews, observations, and online surveys were analyzed using thematic analysis following [Braun and Clarke's \(2006\)](#) six-phase framework: (1) familiarization with the data; (2) generating initial codes; (3) searching for themes; (4) reviewing themes; (5) defining and naming themes; and (6) producing the report. Through inductive coding, three dominant themes emerged: Hybrid Communication Strategy, Youth Engagement through Digital Platforms, and Religious and Moral Framing in Political Messaging. Each theme represents recurring patterns of meaning identified across qualitative and quantitative data.

Theme 1 – Hybrid communication strategy

Political communication is one of the main functions of political parties, especially in facing the 2024 regional head elections. Political communication involves campaign style, vision, mission delivery strategies, and efforts to attract public attention to gain votes. Political communication is an important means of mobilizing support and building positive public perceptions ([Papakyriakopoulos et al., 2019](#)). The success of this strategy can only be assessed after the voting process is complete. PKS, as explained by the Chairman of the West Java Regional Executive Board (DPW), Haru Suandharu, remains consistent in carrying out a polite, refreshing, and Islamic political communication strategy. He emphasized that his party's political communication focuses on empowering the people and making politics a means of struggle that benefits the community. Good political messages

that prioritize cultural and religious values can create a deeper resonance with the audience ([Sunarso et al., 2022](#)). PKS also shows the success of this strategy through the solidity of the party machine that has been built. This is evidenced by PKS's position as one of the top three parties with the highest vote share in West Java in the 2024 legislative elections. According to Haru Suandharu, this achievement shows that their political communication strategy is accepted by the community. However, he also underlined that this success is a big responsibility to continue to prove that PKS is present for the community. This statement supports the hybrid political communication theory, which explains that effective political communication must be able to bridge traditional and modern values ([Gearhart et al., 2024](#)). Meanwhile, PDIP acknowledged the challenges in equalizing the frequency of political communication with the people of West Java. Ineu Purwadewi, Treasurer of DPD PDIP West Java, emphasized that her party focuses on conveying societal struggles to the public. This strategy reflects [Habermas' \(1984\)](#) theory of the public sphere, which emphasizes the importance of dialogue and reflective communication to build mutually understanding relationships between political parties and the community. This can be seen from the many dialogical events between the party and the community through open dialogue events in the mass media, social media, and other public spaces. Ineu also admitted that the number of PDIP supporters in West Java was relatively smaller than in Central or East Java. However, the approach taken, including conveying the "spirit and breath of the community's struggle", has helped PDIP to occupy the top five positions in the legislative vote in West Java. This suggests that community narratives can be an effective tool for building public trust and support ([Utami et al., 2024](#)). However, until now, there are no qualified indicators to be able to say whether community narratives are a check on the acceptance of a political party or not. PDIP continues to implement a political communication strategy that focuses on community struggles in West Java. The nearly three million votes in the region's legislative elections show that some people have accepted PDIP's messages, albeit not fully. This approach is in line with [Habermas' \(1984\)](#) theory of the public sphere, which states that dialogue and reflective communication can strengthen the relationship between political parties and society. According to Ineu

Purwadewi, the party's struggle is not only carried out during the campaign period, but also when party cadres have been elected as representatives of the people. The council members from PDIP are responsible for hearing the aspirations of the community and fighting for their rights in parliament. On the other hand, the Chairman of the West Java Nasdem DPW, Saan Mustopa, considered that his party had carried out progressive political communication by winning eight seats in the West Java regional parliament. However, he also admitted that this achievement still needs to be improved. Nasdem plans to prioritize digital communication strategies through social media to engage young people in political discussions. It can be argued that social media can expand the reach and deepen interactions with the younger generation (Lei *et al.*, 2019). Gerindra's Vice Chairman of West Java DPD, Buky Wibawa, has made certain clarifications in this regard about the political communication of his party as he voiced the narrative of nationalism and national independence. This strategy is consistent with the principle of framing, as messages that promote the vision and ideology of a particular party may create a positive perception in society. Political communication of the Gerindra Party was performed via several platforms such as social media, TV debates, and direct campaigns to reach the people and listen to their concerns. Social media platforms managed by the Gerindra political parties also elegant more about Gerindra imagery into the public outlook. To illustrate, some Gerindra social accounts on Instagram have been focused on promoting Gerindra speculations on its posters. With the Instagram accounts of the party have consistently promoted the views across authoritative Gerindra administrators. They have focused on social messages and rather humorous political persuasions netizens have captured that empathy. As Gerindra's attention to the presidential and the regional head elections focus on the applied communication strategies, then reconofollowers will be justified. Findings and analysis of Utami *et al.*, (2024), about the consistency of party messages reinforce the political credibility of the party that manages to portray a sense of stability to the public. The Democratic Party appears to be gaining the support of the younger generation with the use of a social media strategy. According to Anton Sukartono, the Chairman of the West Java Democrats DPD, his party applies a constant approach in posting narrative ma-

terial with emotional emphasis. In this regard, the Democrats also try to keep their interaction with the population of West Java by addressing the issues of economic and political stability that are need-based. This shows that social media, in particular, can be used with great effectiveness for the instilling emotions and messages that are unique and specific to the youth (De Coninck *et al.*, 2021). Further, this also indicates that emotion is more appealing to the younger supporters of the party. At the same time, PKB considers their political communication strategy to be quite simple since the party leader is outright running for the presidency in the next election. Syai-ful Huda, who is the DPW PKB Head in West Java, stressed that his party has not lost focus by allowing the youth to participate in party politics. This involves a strategy of communication that is meant to be participatory and where the youth are active players, not mere figures within a political strategy. It is however believed that dialog is one of the means through which political parties and society can achieve shared comprehension (Livingstone & Bulger, 2014). Golkar which is commensurate with PKS in the race for second position in the upcoming 2024 elections in West Java also uses a political communication approach that seeks to be close to the people. According to Cucu Sugyati, Vice Chairperson of Women Affairs, Golkar DPD West Java, apart from social media, campaign and personal approach is what the party considers to be more important. This is a commendable approach as it emphasizes the need to first understand the community and its specific needs instead of just creating graphics or videos for social media. Golkar also showed that face-to-face campaigning is more effective than relying only on social media. This move is in support of the ideal of Lubis & Tagor (2022), that direct contact within the community builds closer bonds and allows the political parties to understand the needs in the community much better. PAN sees youth engagement as an important element in political communication. According to Raden Tani, Vice Chairman of PAN West Java's Autonomous Organization Division, young people have higher creativity and are more aware of the trends. He further said that politics should be packaged in a carefree and fun way so that it is easily accepted by the public. It is important to adapt the style of communication to the audience for effective engagement. Raden also pointed out that the thinking of young people is often un-

derestimated, yet it is very often more relevant and current than that of the older generation. PPP, which this year failed to pass the threshold to enter parliament, finally realized how important it was to evaluate their political communication strategy. Chairman of DPW PPP West Java, Pecep Saepul Hidayat, said their strategy targeted young people but the approach used still needs adjustments to be more acceptable to the public. He also mentioned that the failure this time was an important lesson to build a better strategy in the future. This perspective is supported by the ideas of [Lubis & Tagor \(2022\)](#), who, in their paper, noted that political communication strategies have to be developed through the continuous evaluation and adjustment of narratives to meet the needs of the electorate.

Each political party has unique political communication strategy characteristics, especially in terms of the narrative and substance offered to the public. However, the means and channels of communication chosen tend to be uniform, such as the use of social media, the involvement of young people, direct campaigns, and direct engagement with the community. [Lubis & Tagor \(2022\)](#) highlighted that this similarity is understandable because modern political communication patterns demand multi-channel penetration to reach various audience segments. Even so, the main differentiating factor between parties lies in the storytelling, substance, and ideology communicated.

In the context of future strategies, political parties need to evaluate the approaches used during the 2024 elections and consider modifying strategies for local elections. It is important to craft relevant and easy-to-understand political narratives to build resonance with public needs. In addition, data from digital media should also be optimally utilized to map the voter base and develop more effective strategies ([Boulianne et al., 2024](#)). In this case, political parties need to understand that the battlefield between legislative elections and regional head elections has different characteristics, so the strategies applied must also be adjusted. Each political party has a distinctive political communication strategy, especially in terms of the narrative and substance offered to the public ([Lubis & Tagor, 2022](#)). The main difference is in the narrative. However, the communication methods and channels chosen are relatively the same: penetration through social media, efforts to engage young people, direct campaigns, and going to the community. The similar-

ity of methods in communicating the vision is understandable, because that is the pattern of today's political communication strategy. One thing that makes a difference is storytelling, narrative, substance, and ideology. Political parties must be able to package ideology into political education that is easy to digest and relevant according to public needs. Data as a digital media compass must also be used to map the voter base, especially if you want to target certain groups ([Hidayat, 2020](#)). Political parties contesting the 2024 general election and returning to the political arena at the regional head election level certainly need to think about new approaches, ways, and strategies in conducting campaigns and political communication. They need to evaluate political communication during the 2024 general election and what approaches will be effective if they are redone, improved, or even completely changed. The battlefield of the 2024 general election, with the regional head elections, is certainly different, so the strategy must also be different. You cannot expect the results to be the same if the methods used are still the same. As shown in [Table 1](#), political parties in West Java adopted various communication narratives and media strategies tailored to their ideological positioning and target audiences. Each party framed its messaging to resonate with specific demographic groups, such as youth, professionals, traditional Muslim voters, or nationalist constituents. Despite similarities in channel usage—such as the reliance on social media and face-to-face campaigns—the substance and ideological focus of their communication differentiated their approaches. These strategies were designed not only to increase electability but also to solidify voter loyalty and expand influence in the 2024 regional election context. Political parties have an important role in creating a conducive climate for the life of the nation and state in Indonesia ([Prianto, 2024](#)). Political stability resulting from the role of political parties greatly affects security and economic stability. Political parties function as the main driving force in the democratic process, which should encourage the creation of a harmonious atmosphere in the socio-political life of the community. In this case, the role of political parties is not only limited to political decision-making, but also in maintaining state stability. In addition, political parties play a major role in political education for the community. [Ardiyanti et al., \(2024\)](#) mentioned that massive political education can increase com-

Table 1: Political communication strategies of each political party

No.	Political Party	Communication Narrative	Media Used	Target Audience	Expected Results
1	MCC	Polite politics, people empowerment	Social media, face-to-face campaigns	Muslims	Voter support and public political awareness
2	Nasdem	Progressive, inclusive, and embracing the youth	Social media, online discussion	Young generation, progressive	Increase electability and influence in the region
3	PDIP	Community struggle and close to the people	Social media, face-to-face, print media	General public	Maintaining a support base in West Java
4	Gerindra	Strong nationalism, national independence	Social media, television, and in-person campaigns	Nationalist society	Support from voters loyal to nationalism
5	Democrats	Political and economic stability	Social media and dialogue events	Middle-class, young voters	Increase trust in the party, especially among young voters
6	ESC	Moderate Islam, people's welfare	Social media, face-to-face, social-religious activity-based campaigns	Traditional Muslims and young voters	Strengthening the support base
7	Golkar	Economic development, political stability	Social media, direct campaigns	Professionals and the general public	Maintain position as a strong party
8	PAN	Pluralism, moderate Islam	Social media, face-to-face and community campaigns	Young voters and the general public	Attracting young and professional voters
9	PPP	Islamic morality	Social media, direct campaigns, and religious lectures	Traditional Muslims, general public	Muslim support and expanding voter base

munity participation, especially in rural areas. This political education is conducted regularly by parties, including the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS), which provides national insight and political information to cadres and constituents. Such political education would help people understand their political rights and obligations, and increase active participation in the democratic process. These educational programs are expected to shape a better understanding of the importance of healthy political engagement at the national and local levels. Haru Suandharu, Chairman of DPW PKS West Java, said that one of the primary roles of a political party in general is to become the bridge between the aspirations of the people and political regulation. He further stated, "Political parties become agents for political education through which citizens understand how their lives could be affected by the ruling policies. The point here is in line with Yamin *et al.*, (2024), who said that not only

were political parties tasked to forward aspirations, but efforts also had to be made to build people's political awareness to increase active participation. In the context of political recruitment, political parties in Indonesia play an important role. Political parties can be divided into two types: electoral parties and cadre parties. Electoral parties rely on popularity to grow in the short term, while cadre parties rely on structured regeneration for long-term stability. According to Ineu Purwadewi from PDIP, her party is not only a channel for the aspirations of the people but also a political school for prospective leaders. She said learning national ideology, principles, and values is very important so that every policy taken will follow the party's vision. Each political party must prepare its cadres through learning about ideology and values to be able to produce honest leaders. In addition, political parties also have a role as mediators in overcoming horizontal conflicts that often occur

in society. Saan Mustopa from Nasdem emphasized that political parties are not only tasked as political communicators or educators, but also as mediators who resolve conflicts through regulatory channels and cultural approaches. Buky Wibawa, Syaiful Huda, and Cucu Sugyati, representing Gerindra, PKB, and Golkar, respectively, agreed that political parties function as channels of political participation for the community. They explained that political parties become a medium for people to convey their political aspirations, as explained by [Yamin et al., \(2024\)](#) that one of the pillars of democracy is direct community involvement through political parties. Meanwhile, one key word uttered by Pecep Saepul Hidayat (PPP), Anton Sukartono (Democrat), and Raden Tedi (PAN) was: socialization. Political parties have the role of political socialization in the community. The public understands that political parties are the mouthpiece for political programs and policies to be rolled out, and parties argue in parliamentary seats to pass a regulation. The whole process is impossible without socialization to the community, and that is what is meant by a political socializer - a messenger of political policies, programs, and regulations. In general, [Yamin et al., \(2024\)](#) stated that political parties have four roles: as a means of political communication, a means of political socialization, a means of political recruitment, and a forum for socio-political control of the phenomena that occur. In addition, the specific goal of political parties is to increase the political participation of its members and the community. After the 2024 General Election, the process of forming regional leaders in Indonesia is strongly influenced by the dynamics of political communication and the active role of political parties. Qualified regional leaders are not only required to be able to convey their vision and mission clearly, but also to be able to build strong relationships with the community. Effective political communication during the campaign period until post-election is a key factor in building the image and credibility of prospective leaders ([Farkas & Bene, 2021](#)). In the context of politics in Indonesia, the figure of the leader is often the main aspect that people consider in determining their choice. The role played by the political parties in this process is that of the key guarantor. Immediately after an election, political parties become the most relevant mediators and scrutinize candidates for regional elected leaders. Political parties evaluate candidate performances

and ability to lead at regional levels. This involves an in-depth scrutiny of a candidate's background, vision, and strategy concerning regional problems. They can also get the right direction and support from political parties for the effective execution of their responsibilities. Political communication during the campaign and post-election transition period is an important determinant of how a local leader is received by the community. Face-to-face campaigns and direct interaction with constituents provide an opportunity for regional head candidates to build strong emotional connections ([Alayya, 2022](#)). This way, the candidates can listen directly to the needs and aspirations of the community and show concern for local issues. Besides, the public opinion and perception of the regional head candidates are also created by the delivery of political messages through mass media and social media. Moreover, the role played by political parties in creating a conducive political climate also plays a huge role in forming regional leadership figures. The political stability maintained by the political parties means that the process of changing leadership happens smoothly. This gives regional head candidates enough space to carry out their duties without distraction by political instability. With a stable political climate, the candidates for regional heads can become more effective in designing and implementing policies that will affect regional development.

The quality of local leadership also depends on the political education carried out by parties. In their case, political education programs aimed at regional head cadres and candidates make them understand how local politics are and how to deal with local society. This education builds up the competency needed to handle local problems effectively and find constructive solutions to difficulties. Through knowledge and skills acquired, aspiring local leaders can execute their duties better and live up to the expectations of the community more effectively. Haru Suandharu, Chairman of DPW PKS West Java, stated that his party has a high commitment to building cadres that are worth running as regional head leaders. He pointed out that the leader figures to be promoted by PKS are the result of a regeneration process that takes a long time and has been tested. In the view of Haru, it is impossible to create real figures in an instant, but through hard work and ideological strengthening. Similar confidence was also expressed by Ineu Purwadewi, Chairman of DPD PDIP West Java. She said

that PDIP, as a cadre party, places cadres as the main step in creating leader figures. This process includes learning ideology, closeness to the people, and a strong track record of service. This statement supports the theory of leadership development that is oriented towards track records and closeness to the community (Ardiyanti *et al.*, 2024). Saan Mustopa, Chairman of the West Java Nasdem DPW, added that political parties have to advance their cadres as leaders. However, he also mentioned that in some situations, the interests of the people can be a top priority compared to promoting internal cadres. According to Buky Wibawa from Gerindra, the leader figures are the result of political consistency and continuous hard work. He emphasized that originality is key in building figures in society, as Gerindra has shown through the consistency of the vision of national sovereignty championed by its chairman. Syaiful Huda, Chairman of the West Java PKB DPW, said that the leaders promoted by PKB must reflect moderate Islamic values that embrace differences. He emphasized that character cannot be fabricated, but must emanate from a track record that is already known to the public. This supports that the reputation and credibility of a leader is the result of experience and interaction with the community (Fraccaroli *et al.*, 2022). Cucu Sugyati, Vice Chairman of DPD Golkar West Java, revealed that Golkar always has the right strategy in introducing leader figures to the public. According to him, the figures promoted by Golkar are the result of community aspirations, so they have a strong relevance to public needs. This means that it is important to ensure that the leader figure reflects the aspirations of the community being represented. The Democratic Party, PPP, and PAN are of one mind that building a leader figure is not an easy matter, especially in the context of the people of West Java. They believe that they need to introduce their cadres to the community so that their vision of building society can be better accepted by the West Java public. In addition, one thing they are concerned about is the involvement of young people to participate in conveying the party's vision and ideology. After the 2024 elections, public opinion about regional leadership figures is strongly influenced by the way political communication and the role of political parties in the election process and leadership transition. Effective political communication during the campaign and transition period plays a key role in shaping the

public's image and perception of regional head candidates (Ardiyanti *et al.*, 2024). Research found that consistent campaigns and local needs of the community can strengthen the credibility of candidates in the eyes of the public (Roemmele & Gibson, 2020). Political messages that are delivered clearly and consistently help create positive views and strengthen public support for the candidate. Structured and sustained political communication is proven to increase public trust in the long term. Another factor is the political party's role in handling the process of candidate selection for regional heads, which bears consequences for public opinion. Political parties able to handle the screening and evaluation of their candidates well will obtain more trust from the public towards them. Where political parties have good credibility—with past experience in selecting future leaders—the public will also have a higher propensity to give their support. On the other hand, if political parties are seen as opaque or even having some vested interests, public confidence will be lost and affect negative views toward regional head candidates. The socialization done by the political parties will shape public opinion on the regional head candidates. According to Malabar (2020), appropriate socialization would enhance more public involvement in the process of politics and yield favorable views of regional head candidates. Through socialization programs, regional head candidates will be better known by the public. The parties that actively take part in organizing social events and campaigns give ample opportunity to the candidates for meeting face-to-face with the constituents, thus articulating their vision and mission and showing concern for the local problems. Those face-to-face interactions contribute to the strong emotional relation with the community and create a positive opinion of the candidates. Political communication in the mass media and social media also significantly influences public opinion. The mass media acts as the main channel in disseminating information about regional head candidates and their programs. If the media provides objective and balanced coverage, the public will get accurate information and be able to make better judgments. However, if the media becomes a vehicle for negative campaigns or favors certain parties, public opinion may be formed based on biased or incomplete information. Social media, as a highly influential platform, allows people to actively participate in political dis-

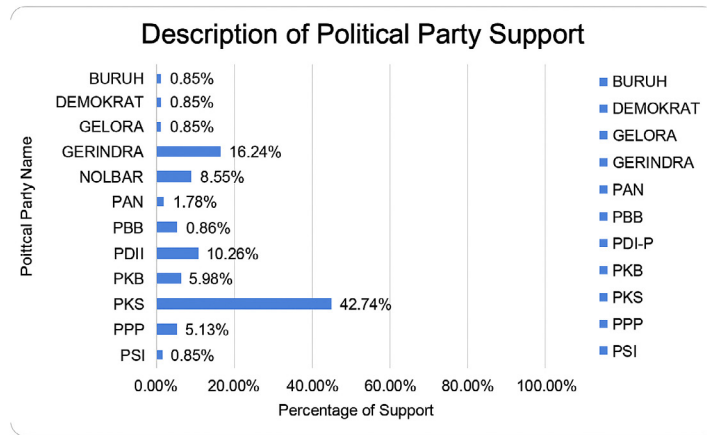


Fig. 2: Respondents' support for political parties (source: 2024 research results)

cussions and disseminate their views (Farkas & Bene, 2021). Local leaders who are active in social media can more easily communicate with constituents and build support. However, social media also has the potential to generate controversy and hoaxes that can negatively influence public opinion. Therefore, it is important for regional head candidates to manage their presence on social media wisely. The role of political parties in political education also contributes to public opinion. By providing a better understanding of the political process and the role of candidates, political parties help people make more informed decisions. Effective political education increases public awareness and knowledge of important issues and competing candidates, thereby positively influencing public opinion. PKS, according to Haru Suandharu, Chairman of DPW PKS West Java, continued to show high electability in the West Java regional head election despite facing internal dynamics after the 2024 election. He revealed that dynamics in political parties are natural and must be managed for the benefit of the people. Haru also emphasized the importance of uniting post-election to win the next regional head election. PDIP, which is in the public spotlight after the 2024 election, continues to focus on community issues as an ideological party. Ineu Purwadewi, Deputy Chairperson of the PDIP Women's Division in West Java, said that her party is confident to nominate its own cadres in the regional head elections in West Java. This approach shows PDIP's consistency as a cadre party committed to its ideology. In addition, she noted that public opinion towards PDIP will evolve based on two possibilities: continuity of

post-election political stances or changes in strategy according to political dynamics.

Theme 2 – Youth engagement through digital platforms

In an effort to map public preferences and opinions towards political parties in West Java, researchers surveyed 117 respondents. The first question was about political party support, and the results showed that PKS, Gerindra, PDIP, Golkar, and PKB were the top five parties of interest to West Java residents. A total of 50 respondents chose PKS, 19 respondents chose Gerindra, 12 respondents chose PDIP, 10 respondents chose Golkar, and 7 respondents chose PKB. The data is representative of the results of the legislative votes in West Java, where the top five political parties with the highest votes are the five parties. However, the order is different. If referring to the legislative votes in West Java in the 2024 general election, the top five political parties are Gerindra, PKS, Golkar, PDIP, and PKB. As shown in Fig. 2, respondents' support for political parties in West Java revealed that PKS ranked highest with 50 votes, followed by Gerindra (19), PDIP (12), Golkar (10), and PKB (7). These five parties emerged as the most prominent among survey participants. Although the order differs from the official legislative election results in the 2024 general election—where Gerindra leads, followed by PKS, Golkar, PDIP, and PKB—the composition of the top parties remains consistent. This indicates a general alignment between public sentiment captured in the survey and formal electoral outcomes, albeit with some variations in rank. The mass media channel most used by respondents in listening to various forms of political

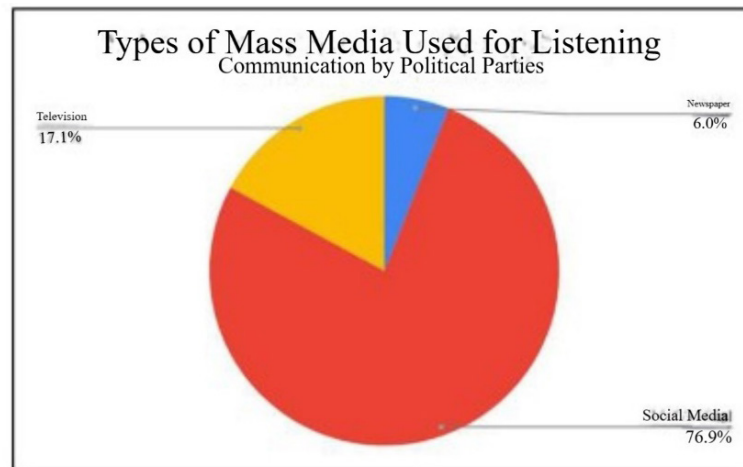


Fig. 3: Types of mass media used by respondents in listening to political party communication (source: 2024 research results)

communication from parties is social media. 76.9 percent stated that they saw social media as the main channel for receiving political communication. Positive conversations on social media can build positive public opinion towards political parties (Kizgin *et al.*, 2018). A smaller percentage, such as 17.1 percent of respondents, claimed to see political communication through television, and 6 percent through newspapers. This finding is in line with and relevant to the interview results of political party representatives, who stated that they focus on delivering political communication through social media.

As shown in Fig. 3, the majority of respondents (76.9%) reported that social media served as their primary source for receiving political communication from parties. In contrast, only 17.1% relied on television, and a smaller portion (6%) accessed political content through newspapers. This pattern confirms the interview findings with political party representatives, who emphasized prioritizing social media channels to engage with the public, especially the younger demographic. The data highlights a significant shift from conventional mass media toward digital platforms in political messaging strategies. The mass media platform most often used by respondents to view various political communications from parties is Instagram (61.54 percent). The next order is TikTok (14.53%), and Facebook and X have the same percentage of 11.97 percent.

As shown in Fig. 4, Instagram dominated as the most frequently used social media platform for accessing political communication, with 61.5% of respondents

indicating it as their primary source. TikTok followed with 14.5%, while Facebook and Twitter/X each accounted for 12% of the responses. These findings reinforce the growing dominance of visually driven platforms in political outreach, especially among younger demographics. The preference for Instagram suggests that political messages packaged through visual storytelling, reels, and influencer-based narratives may have greater engagement potential in the current electoral landscape. In general, all interviewees from each political party agreed that they engage in political communication through social media, without prioritizing any particular platform. However, the public considers Instagram to be the social media channel that they most often access to consume news or political party communication products. This is supported by global trends, where social media Instagram and Twitter are the main platforms for delivering political communication, especially to attract the attention of young people (Safiullah *et al.*, 2017). Social media is the primary channel for political communication, as more than half of voters are young people who spend almost all their time on social media (Magdaci *et al.*, 2022). This is in line with the phenomenon of young people who are fond of online political discussions (Papakyriakopoulos *et al.*, 2019). In addition, political parties still have to conduct face-to-face campaigns to greet and engage in dialogue with people who are relatively less active on social media, namely the older generation who prefer face-to-face meetings. Therefore, political communication combines two approaches: social media and direct campaigns. The

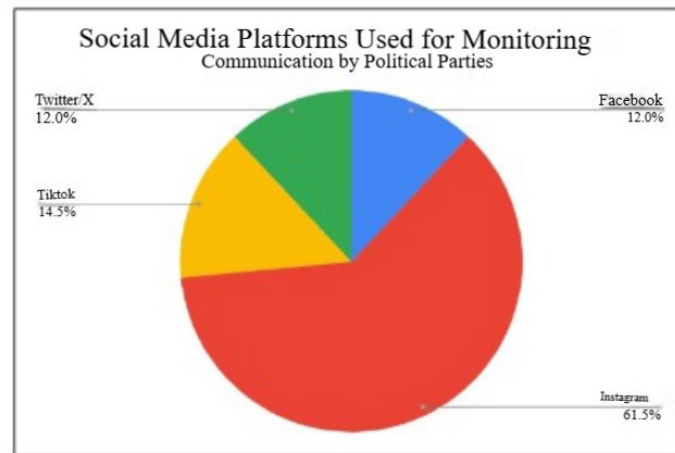


Fig. 4: Social media platforms used by respondents in listening to political party communication (source: 2024 research results)

combination of face-to-face and digital campaigns is believed to double public support and affect the electability of candidates. The physical campaigns carried out by political parties vary, ranging from organizing special activities to attract the attention of the masses, visiting areas as an effort to “pick up the ball”, to working visits by political parties to sub-districts. This strategy is considered effective and significant in increasing support (de Vreese et al., 2018).

Theme 3 – Religious and moral framing in political messaging

Among the top five political parties in West Java, direct campaign activities are carried out differently, such as Gerindra focusing more on organizing activities initiated by political parties, Golkar conducting working visits to sub-districts, PDIP being similar to Gerindra, which focuses on organizing internal activities, and PKB and PKS focusing on visiting areas to conduct dialogue.

As shown in Fig. 5, the most frequently attended direct meetings with political parties varied across the top five supported parties. PKS had the highest engagement rate across all categories, with 52.0% of respondents attending party-organized events, 41.3% participating in local visits (silaturahmi), and 35.3% encountering party work visits to sub-districts. This suggests a strong grassroots mobilization strategy by PKS. Gerindra and PDIP showed moderate engagement in party events (21.3% and 12.0%, respectively), while Golkar had the highest percentage (23.5%) of respondents attending work visits to sub-districts.

PKB showed balanced participation, with 16.0% attending local visits and 11.8% attending work visits. These findings reflect the diverse outreach methods utilized by political parties to maintain direct contact with constituents during the election period. Based on the processed data, it can be concluded that the phenomenon of political communication in Indonesia is strongly influenced by several main factors, including the role of political actors, the delivery of political messages, and the role of mass media and social media. Political actors have a central role in influencing political stability in Indonesia. They not only function as policy makers, but also as figures capable of influencing security and economic stability. Their role in political communication is huge, as their messages have a direct impact on public opinion and the direction of state policy. Mass media such as radio, television, newspapers and magazines play a significant role in disseminating ideas from political parties to the public. Political figures often get the spotlight through the media, either directly or indirectly. However, there is a phenomenon where the media is used as a tool to increase the momentary popularity of political figures, which ultimately doubts the neutrality of the media as a pillar of democracy. Nevertheless, there are still many credible media outlets that fulfill their role as watchdogs of democracy and disseminators of objective information. Social media such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, and Twitter are now very important platforms for political communication (Mazzoleni & Bracciale, 2018). The development of information technology allows politicians to direct-

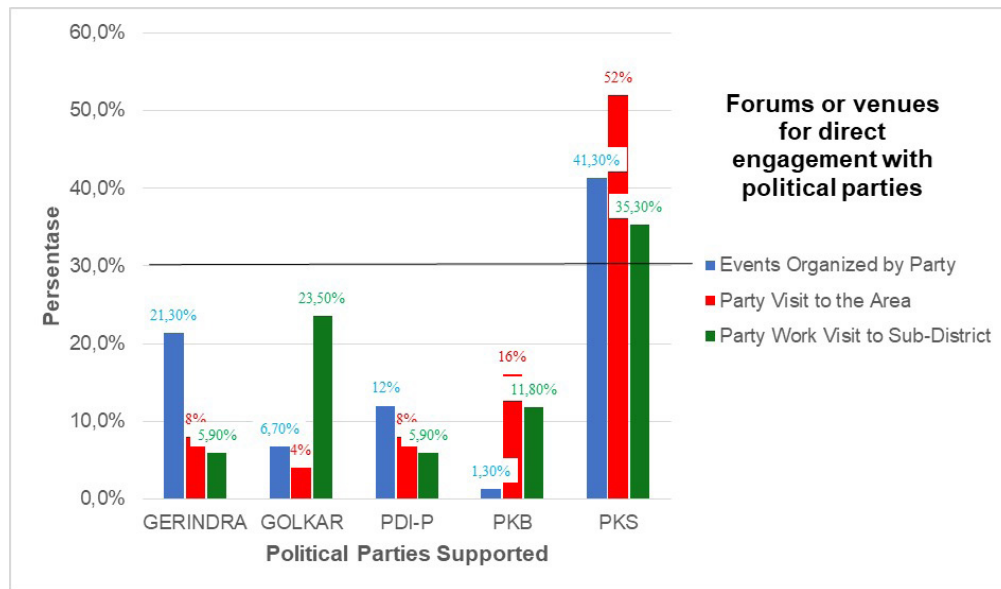


Fig. 5: Direct meeting forums conducted by political parties (source: 2024 research results)

ly communicate with the public and netizens. Social media has changed the way people get information, as they are not only consumers of information but also disseminators of news and opinions. This creates a more interactive political communication, where people can provide direct feedback on emerging political issues. More effectively, however, direct communication via face-to-face methods like campaigns, blusukan, and field meetings is still most capable of creating links in emotions. This will let the politicians come up with first-hand experience, understanding the needs and hopes of the community; establishing deeper levels of confidence and support are also provided while this is done. Face-to-face interactions present several opportunities through which leaders would appear concerned by local situations and therefore provide solutions that local populations find appropriate. The direct campaign exposure is still effective in gaining public attention, especially to attract support that has not been touched by digital media (Kreiss & McGregor, 2018). In the post-2024 election context, all these factors contribute to public opinion forming toward regional leadership figures. Effective and continued political communication will influence the public's assessment of success or failure of the regional head candidates. The role of the media in relaying information about the candidates and their programs can strengthen or dampen pub-

lic perceptions. Social media fast-tracks this process by providing a forum for the airing of views and assessment of the performance of the candidates in real-time. Moreover, direct communication in the process of creating emotional ties with the community will also determine the support that regional head candidates get after an election. The politicians able to build good relations with their constituents through direct campaigns and open dialogue will have a stronger base of support. Otherwise, those who fail in these direct interactions may find it hard to gain stable support from the community. Generally speaking, political communication carried out by the parties, be it through mass media, social media, or direct contact, is what greatly affects public opinion after the elections in 2024. All these factors interlink to influence public perceptions of the elected regional leaders. Deep knowledge of the dynamics of this political communication is necessary in assessing how the regional leadership figures can accomplish their duties and meet community expectations.

CONCLUSION

The article *"Political Communication and the Role of Political Parties in Producing Regional Leadership Figures and Their Impact on Public Opinion After the 2024 Election"* contributes to understanding how political actors shape Indonesia's political, security, and

economic stability through communication processes that go beyond policymaking. Political actors act as key communicators who influence public perceptions and policy orientation. The messages conveyed by political parties reflect their ideological visions and strategic objectives, serving to mobilize support and frame public opinion toward parties and candidates. Transparency and clarity in message delivery are fundamental to building public trust and sustaining democratic credibility. Traditional mass media—such as radio, television, newspapers, and magazines—continue to play an influential role in disseminating political information. However, the tendency to use media for instant popularity often raises questions about neutrality. Despite this, reliable media remain crucial as trusted sources of accurate political information. In contrast, social media has transformed political communication into an interactive and dialogic process, allowing citizens not only to consume but also to produce and share information in real time. Direct face-to-face interactions, including community visits (*blusukan*), remain powerful for fostering emotional engagement and strengthening grassroots support networks. These dynamics collectively shape public opinion about regional leadership figures after the 2024 elections. The interplay between mass media, social media, and interpersonal communication channels determines how citizens perceive the success or failure of political candidates. Therefore, political parties must reform their communication strategies toward greater transparency, factual consistency, and ethical responsibility. They should leverage social media constructively—avoiding disinformation—while revitalizing direct community interactions to strengthen emotional and moral connections with constituents.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

D. F. Sjoaraida developed the conceptual framework, coordinated the overall research design, and prepared the final version of the manuscript. K. A. Wibowo performed the literature review, designed the research instruments, and contributed to the analysis and interpretation of the findings. S. Perbawasari contributed to the fieldwork coordination, data collection, and initial manuscript drafting. P. Subekti conducted data analysis (qualitative and quantitative), contributed to literature synthesis, and finalized the manuscript formatting and editing.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no potential conflict of interest regarding the publication of this work. In addition, the ethical issues, including plagiarism, informed consent, misconduct, data fabrication and/or falsification, double publication and/or submission, and redundancy, have been fully addressed by the authors.

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ABBREVIATIONS (NOMENCLATURE)

AI	Artificial Intelligence
DPD	Regional Representative Council
DPW	Regional Executive Board
PAN	National Mandate Party
PDIP	Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle
PKB	National Awakening Party
PKS	Prosperous Justice Party
PPP	United Development Party

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