



Digital Political Discourse and Identity Narratives: A Framing Analysis of Sara Issues in Electoral Controversies

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ABSTRAK

The rapid expansion of digital communication technologies has transformed political discourse, particularly during electoral periods. This study employs a qualitative research design using framing analysis to examine how SARA-related issues are constructed within digital political discourse. Data were collected from social media discussions, online news coverage, and political commentary related to electoral controversies in Indonesia. The findings reveal that SARA narratives are framed through three dominant mechanisms: identity mobilisation, moral polarisation, and emotional amplification. Identity mobilisation emphasises religious or ethnic solidarity to influence political alignment. These framing patterns contribute to the intensification of political polarisation within digital spaces. The study highlights the role of algorithmic amplification and networked communication structures in accelerating the spread of identity-based narratives.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of information and communication technology has significantly transformed how societies access information, interact, and participate in political processes. Digital transformation has positioned social media as a new public sphere that functions as an arena for political discourse, particularly during electoral contests. Within modern democratic ecosystems, digital spaces are not merely channels for disseminating political information but also arenas for constructing narratives, framing issues, and shaping public perceptions toward political actors and political events. This phenomenon has intensified alongside the growing number of social media users worldwide, including Indonesia, which has one of the highest digital penetration rates in Southeast Asia.

Empirical data demonstrate that social media usage in Indonesia has reached a substantial scale. By early 2023, Indonesia recorded approximately 167 million social media users, representing about 60.4% of the total population. Furthermore, national surveys indicate that 42.3% of Indonesians rely on social media as their primary source of political information, surpassing traditional online news portals and broadcast media (Fata et al., 2025). These figures illustrate the central role of digital platforms in shaping contemporary political communication dynamics.

The extensive penetration of social media has consequently transformed digital platforms into primary arenas for political contestation during electoral periods. Platforms such as Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube enable political actors, campaign teams, supporters, and interest groups to disseminate narratives designed to influence public opinion. However, the rise of digital political communication has also produced several unintended consequences, including political polarization, the spread of disinformation, and the instrumentalization of identity-based narratives such as religion, ethnicity, race, and intergroup relations—commonly referred to in Indonesia as SARA (Saputra, 2024).

This phenomenon has become increasingly visible during several electoral cycles in Indonesia, particularly during the 2014, 2019, and 2024 general elections. Social media has not only functioned as a campaign tool but has also evolved into a space for spreading political propaganda, misinformation, and identity-based narratives that may exacerbate social tensions within society. In certain cases, identity-based narratives have been strategically employed to delegitimize political opponents by constructing stereotypes, stigmas, and negative frames toward particular social groups (Nasrullah, 2026).

Furthermore, several studies highlight that digital political discourse is strongly influenced by platform algorithms that create the phenomenon known as filter bubbles and echo chambers, where individuals are predominantly exposed to information that aligns with their existing political preferences. Such conditions intensify political polarization and reduce the possibility of rational and inclusive democratic dialogue in digital public spheres (Ate et al., 2024).

The spread of disinformation within digital political communication is also supported by empirical evidence showing the increasing number of political hoaxes circulating during electoral periods. Reports from digital fact-checking organizations reveal that 2,330 hoaxes circulated in Indonesia’s digital space in 2023, with approximately 1,292 cases (around 55%) related to political issues. Moreover, national survey findings indicate that approximately 42% of Indonesian citizens have believed information that was later identified as electoral disinformation (Frontiers in Political Science, 2025). These findings demonstrate the vulnerability of digital ecosystems to manipulation through strategic narrative construction.

Table 1. Social Media Usage and Political Information in Indonesia

Indicator	Data
Total social media users in Indonesia	167 million
Percentage of population using social media	60.4%
Citizens obtaining political information from social media	42.3%
Total hoaxes recorded in 2023	2,330
Political-related hoaxes	1,292 (55%)

Source: Compilation of studies on digital political communication (Frontiers in Political Science, 2025).

Beyond the issue of disinformation, identity-based narratives related to SARA frequently emerge within digital political discourse. These narratives are often mobilized as political strategies to strengthen in-group solidarity while delegitimizing opposing political actors or groups. In this context, media framing and discursive framing within digital platforms play crucial roles in shaping how political issues are interpreted by the public. Through framing processes, political actors and media institutions selectively emphasize particular aspects of reality, thereby influencing how audiences understand and interpret political events.

Despite the growing body of literature on digital political communication, most studies have primarily focused on political polarization, misinformation, or digital campaign strategies in general. Studies that specifically examine the construction of SARA narratives through framing processes and their influence on public perception remain relatively limited. Understanding how identity narratives are constructed, circulated, and interpreted by the public is essential for explaining the dynamics of discursive conflict in contemporary digital democracies.

Das Sein (Empirical Reality)

Empirically, digital platforms have evolved into major arenas of political discourse characterized by the widespread circulation of disinformation, increasing political polarization, and the strategic use of identity-based narratives during electoral contests.

Das Sollen (Normative Expectation)

Normatively, within the perspective of deliberative democracy, digital public spaces should function as inclusive arenas for rational discourse, where political communication is based on accurate information and constructive dialogue that strengthens democratic participation.

Research Gap

Although numerous studies have examined political polarization and disinformation in digital media, there remains a significant gap in research that comprehensively analyzes how SARA-based narratives are constructed through framing processes in digital electoral discourse and how these frames shape public perceptions. Therefore, this study seeks to analyze the framing of SARA narratives in electoral controversies within digital spaces and examine their implications for public perception formation.

LITERATUR REVIEW

Framing Theory in Digital Political Communication

Framing theory has become one of the most widely used analytical frameworks in communication studies to explain how media constructs social and political reality. According to Robert M. Entman, framing refers to the process of selecting certain aspects of perceived reality and making them more salient in a communicating text in order to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and treatment recommendation (Entman, 1993). Through framing, media actors and political communicators are able to influence how audiences interpret political events and issues. In the context of digital political communication, framing becomes even more complex because narratives are no longer constructed solely by traditional media institutions but also by social media users, political influencers, and algorithmic systems that amplify specific narratives.

In electoral contexts, framing is frequently used to construct political legitimacy, shape public opinion, and influence voter perceptions toward candidates or political groups. Research indicates that media framing can significantly affect how political actors are evaluated by the public, particularly when identity-related narratives are involved. For example, studies examining digital political communication in Indonesia demonstrate that online news portals and social media platforms often frame electoral issues through ideological, identity-based, or conflict-oriented perspectives that can reinforce public polarization (Nasrullah, 2026). Such framing processes can influence public perception by highlighting particular attributes of political actors while simultaneously marginalizing alternative interpretations.

Furthermore, digital media environments intensify framing effects due to the speed and scale of information dissemination. Social media platforms enable the rapid circulation of political narratives through mechanisms such as hashtags, algorithmic recommendations, and user-generated content. As a result, identity narratives particularly those related to religion, ethnicity, race, and intergroup relations (SARA) can spread quickly and shape public discourse during electoral periods. Research has shown that framing within digital platforms can amplify emotional responses, group identity mobilization, and ideological polarization among audiences (Ate et al., 2024). Therefore, analyzing framing processes in digital electoral discourse is essential to understand how identity narratives are constructed and how they influence public perception in contemporary democratic societies.

Identity Narratives and Political Polarization in Digital Electoral Discourse

Identity politics has become an increasingly prominent feature of political communication in many democracies, including Indonesia. Identity narratives refer to political messages that mobilize social identities such as religion, ethnicity, race, or cultural affiliation as a means of building political support or delegitimizing opposing groups. In digital environments, these narratives often emerge through symbolic language, stereotypes, or emotionally charged messages that resonate strongly with particular social groups.

Several studies have shown that the use of identity-based narratives in digital political discourse can contribute to increased polarization and social fragmentation. For instance, research on political communication after the 2024 Indonesian presidential election found that social media platforms played a significant role in intensifying ideological divisions among voters, largely due to the circulation of identity-based narratives and disinformation (Fata et al., 2025). Such narratives are often strategically framed to create in-group solidarity while simultaneously portraying political opponents as threats to collective identity.

The dynamics of digital platforms further amplify the spread of identity narratives through mechanisms such as echo chambers and filter bubbles. These phenomena occur when algorithmic systems prioritize content that aligns with users' previous interactions and ideological preferences, thereby limiting exposure to diverse viewpoints. As a result, individuals may become increasingly entrenched within homogeneous information environments that reinforce existing political beliefs and biases. Studies on social media and political communication have shown that such algorithmic filtering can intensify the influence of identity narratives by repeatedly exposing users to similar frames and messages (Setiawati et al., 2023).

In the Indonesian electoral context, identity narratives related to SARA have repeatedly appeared in digital discourse, particularly during highly competitive electoral contests. These narratives may shape public perceptions by framing political competition not merely as a contest between policy alternatives but as a conflict between social or cultural identities. Consequently, the presence of identity narratives in digital electoral discourse raises important questions regarding their influence on democratic deliberation and public perception. Understanding how these narratives are framed and circulated in digital spaces therefore becomes crucial for analyzing the broader dynamics of political communication in contemporary democracies.)

METHODOLOGY

Framing Analysis using the Entman and Pan & Kosicki Models

This study employs a qualitative research approach with framing analysis to examine how identity-based narratives related to SARA (ethnicity, religion, race, and intergroup relations) are constructed within digital political discourse during electoral controversies. The use of framing analysis is particularly relevant to the research title “Digital Political Discourse and Identity Narratives: A Framing Analysis of SARA Issues in Electoral Controversies”, as the study seeks to understand how political narratives are constructed, emphasized, and interpreted in digital media environments. Framing analysis allows researchers to identify how certain issues are highlighted, structured, and communicated in a way that influences public perception.

In contemporary political communication studies, framing analysis is widely used to analyze how media and political actors shape the interpretation of social and political issues. According to Robert M. Entman, framing refers to the process of selecting certain aspects of perceived reality and making them more salient in a communicating text, thereby promoting specific problem definitions, causal interpretations, moral evaluations, and treatment recommendations (Entman, 1993). In the context of digital political discourse, framing becomes increasingly significant because political narratives are not only constructed by traditional media institutions but also by social media users, influencers, and digital communities that actively participate in shaping public discourse.

This research adopts two complementary framing analysis models, namely the Entman framing model and the Pan and Kosicki framing structure model. These two models are widely used in political communication research because they provide a comprehensive framework for analyzing both the conceptual and structural dimensions of framing within media texts.

Entman Framing Model

The first analytical framework used in this study is the framing model proposed by Robert M. Entman. According to Entman, framing can be identified through four key elements:

- a. Problem Definition–how the issue is defined or characterized in the media narrative.
- b. Causal Interpretation–the identification of the causes or actors responsible for the problem.
- c. Moral Evaluation–the moral judgment or ethical interpretation associated with the issue.
- d. Treatment Recommendation–the proposed solutions or actions suggested in response to the issue.

In this research, the Entman model is applied to analyze how SARA-related narratives are framed in digital political discourse during electoral controversies. For instance, digital media posts or news content may define a political conflict as an identity-based struggle, attribute responsibility to specific social or political groups, assign moral judgment to particular actors, and recommend certain political or social responses. Through this analytical framework, the study aims to identify patterns in how identity narratives are constructed and disseminated in digital political environments.

Recent studies in digital political communication have confirmed that framing plays a crucial role in shaping public perception and political polarization in online environments (Setiawati et al., 2023; Ate et al., 2024). Therefore, analyzing the framing structure of SARA narratives is essential for understanding how identity-based political messages influence audience interpretation and political attitudes.

Pan and Kosicki Framing Structure Model

To complement the conceptual analysis provided by the Entman model, this research also utilizes the framing structure model developed by Zhongdang Pan and Gerald M. Kosicki. This model focuses on the structural organization of media discourse, allowing researchers to examine how framing is constructed through textual elements.

Pan and Kosicki identify four main structural dimensions of framing:

- a. Syntactic Structure–the arrangement of information within the news narrative, including headlines, leads, quotations, and sources.
- b. Script Structure–the narrative structure that organizes events and actors within the story.
- c. Thematic Structure–the broader themes or patterns that connect different elements of the narrative.
- d. Rhetorical Structure–the use of language, metaphors, images, and stylistic elements to emphasize particular meanings.

In the context of this research, the Pan and Kosicki model is used to analyze how digital media texts construct SARA narratives through language choices, narrative structures, and rhetorical strategies. For example, the presence of emotionally charged words, identity labels, or symbolic references to religion and ethnicity may indicate rhetorical framing designed to mobilize audience emotions or reinforce group identities.

Data Collection and Analysis

The data for this study consist of digital political content related to electoral controversies, including online news articles, social media posts, and digital political commentary. The data are collected through purposive sampling by selecting content that explicitly discusses electoral issues involving identity-related narratives. The time frame of the analysis focuses on the electoral period when political discourse is most active in digital media.

The analysis process involves several stages:

- a. Data collection from digital platforms containing discussions related to electoral controversies.
- b. Content categorization to identify texts containing SARA-related narratives.
- c. Framing analysis using the Entman model to examine problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and treatment recommendation.
- d. Structural analysis using the Pan and Kosicki model to identify syntactic, script, thematic, and rhetorical structures.
- e. Interpretation of findings to understand how identity narratives are framed and how such frames may influence public perception.

By combining these two analytical models, this research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how identity narratives related to SARA are constructed within digital political discourse and how these narratives shape public interpretation of electoral controversies.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 2. Entman Framing Model Elements in the Analysis of SARA Narratives in Digital Political Discourse

Framing Element	Analytical Indicator	Digital Political Discourse
Problem Definition	How electoral issues are presented in digital media	Electoral competition framed as a conflict of religious or ethnic identity
Causal Interpretation	Identification of actors or groups responsible for the issue	Narratives blaming certain political groups as threats to religious values
Moral Evaluation	Normative judgment toward political actors	A candidate portrayed as a defender of moral values or as violating cultural norms
Treatment Recommendation	Proposed solutions or actions	Calls to support certain candidates to protect group identity

Source: Adapted from Entman (1993); research analysis.

Table 3. Framing Structure According to the Pan and Kosicki Model in Digital Political Discourse

Framing Structure	Analytical Focus	Indicators in Digital Content
Syntactic Structure	Organization of information in the text	Headlines, news leads, or social media captions highlighting religious or ethnic identity
Script Structure	Narrative flow of events	Political conflict narratives depicting confrontation between identity groups
Thematic Structure	Main themes within discourse	Themes of religious loyalty, nationalism, or identity threats
Rhetorical Structure	Language style and symbols used	Use of metaphors, religious symbols, identity labels, and emotionally charged expressions

Source: Pan & Kosicki (1993); Research Analysis.

Table 4. Patterns of SARA Narratives in Digital Political Discourse During Electoral Periods

Type of Identity Narrative	Framing Characteristics	Impact on Public Perception
Religious Narrative	Candidates associated with religious symbols or legitimacy	Strengthens group loyalty based on religious identity
Ethnic Narrative	Candidates framed as representatives of ethnic groups	Reinforces ethnic solidarity in political preferences
Nationalism Narrative	Candidates portrayed as defenders of the nation	Increases support based on national identity
Identity Threat Narrative	Political opponents framed as threats to cultural or religious values	Intensifies political polarization in society

Source: Analysis of digital electoral discourse (Fata et al., 2025; Ate et al., 2024).

Table 5. Mechanisms of Identity Narrative Dissemination in Social Media

Digital Factor	Dissemination Mechanism	Implication for Political Discourse
Platform Algorithms	Recommendation systems amplify highly engaged content	Identity narratives become more viral
Echo Chambers	Users exposed mainly to information aligned with their political views	Increased polarization of public opinion
Political Influencers	Digital figures reinforce particular interpretations of political issues	Identity framing becomes more widespread

User Participation	Sharing, reposting, commenting	Continuous reproduction of identity narratives in public discourse
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Source: Setiawati et al. (2023); Ate et al. (2024).

Table 6. Relationship Between SARA Framing and Public Perception in Digital Electoral Discourse

Framing Variable	Analytical Indicator	Impact on Public Perception
Intensity of Identity Narratives	Frequency of religious, ethnic, or group identity labels	Increased political identity sensitivity
Discourse Polarization	Contrast between “us” and “them” groups	Strengthened public opinion conflicts
Moral Framing	Normative judgments toward candidates	Influences voter preferences
Content Virality	Number of shares, comments, and interactions	Expands the reach of framing influence

Source: Research analysis based on Entman (1993); Pan & Kosicki (1993); Fata et al. (2025).

The rapid expansion of digital media has significantly transformed the landscape of political communication, particularly in electoral contexts where political actors compete to influence public opinion through the construction of narratives. In Indonesia, the digital public sphere has become increasingly central to political discourse, especially during electoral periods characterized by heightened competition and public attention. Social media platforms such as Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube provide spaces where political narratives are produced, circulated, and contested by various actors including political elites, campaign teams, media organizations, influencers, and ordinary citizens. Within this digital ecosystem, narratives related to identity particularly those associated with religion, ethnicity, race, and intergroup relations (SARA) often emerge as strategic discursive tools used to frame political issues and shape public perceptions. The analysis conducted in this study using framing analysis models developed by Robert M. Entman and Zhongdang Pan together with Gerald M. Kosicki reveals that identity-based narratives in digital electoral controversies are not randomly constructed but follow systematic framing patterns that influence how political issues are interpreted by the public.

In digital political discourse, the process of framing begins with the definition of the problem, which represents the first analytical element in the Entman model. The findings indicate that digital narratives often frame electoral controversies not merely as policy debates or democratic competition but as conflicts involving identity and group interests. Through this framing process, electoral competition may be interpreted as a struggle between cultural or religious values rather than as a contest between political programs or policy alternatives. This pattern of framing is evident in many digital discussions where political issues are linked with symbolic representations of identity groups. Such framing can lead audiences to interpret political conflicts through the lens of collective identity rather than through rational policy evaluation. This finding is consistent with recent research demonstrating that digital political communication frequently amplifies identity-based interpretations of political events due to the emotional resonance of identity narratives in online environments (Fata et al., 2025).

The second element of the Entman model concerns causal interpretation, which refers to how narratives attribute responsibility for a particular issue or problem. In the context of digital electoral discourse, the analysis reveals that identity narratives often assign responsibility for political tensions to specific social or political groups. In many cases, the narrative structure attributes blame to opposing political camps or ideological groups that are portrayed as threats to particular religious or cultural identities. This attribution of responsibility often appears through the use of simplified narratives that associate political actors with broader identity categories. Such framing mechanisms can contribute to the polarization of public opinion because they encourage audiences to interpret political issues as conflicts between competing social groups rather than as disagreements over policy or governance. Studies of digital political communication have shown that these types of causal interpretations are frequently reinforced by algorithm-driven content distribution systems that prioritize emotionally engaging narratives (Ate et al., 2024).

The third framing element, moral evaluation, involves the assignment of normative judgments toward political actors or actions. Within digital electoral discourse, moral evaluation is often expressed through narratives that portray certain actors as defenders of moral or religious values while depicting opponents as violating those values. This moral framing is frequently reinforced through symbolic language, emotional rhetoric, and selective presentation of information. The rhetorical strategies observed in the analyzed digital texts demonstrate that identity narratives often rely on moral dichotomies that divide political actors into categories of "right" and "wrong," "patriotic" and "unpatriotic," or "faithful" and "unfaithful." Such binary moral framing simplifies complex political realities and encourages audiences to adopt moralized interpretations of political events. Previous research has suggested that moral framing in political discourse can significantly influence public attitudes because it activates deeply rooted social identities and value systems (Setiawati et al., 2023).

The final component of the Entman framing model involves treatment recommendation, which refers to the solutions or actions proposed in response to the framed problem. In digital political narratives related to electoral controversies, treatment recommendations often take the form of calls for political mobilization, support for specific candidates, or resistance against perceived threats to group identity. These recommendations may appear in the form of hashtags, slogans, campaign messages, or calls for collective action. The framing analysis reveals that these treatment recommendations frequently emphasize solidarity within identity groups and encourage audiences to support political actors who are portrayed as representing the interests of those groups. In this way, framing not only shapes the interpretation of political issues but also influences the behavioral intentions of audiences.

While the Entman model provides a conceptual framework for understanding the key elements of framing, the structural analysis proposed by Pan and Kosicki offers additional insight into how framing is constructed within media texts. The syntactic structure of digital political discourse often reveals how information is organized to emphasize certain interpretations. Headlines, captions, and opening statements frequently highlight identity-related aspects of political controversies, thereby guiding audience attention toward particular interpretive frames. This structural arrangement reflects the strategic use of textual elements to shape audience perception. The selection of sources, quotations, and visual materials also contributes to the construction of specific frames by privileging particular perspectives while marginalizing others.

The script structure of digital narratives further illustrates how events and actors are organized within a broader storyline. In many digital discussions of electoral controversies, narratives follow a conflict-oriented script that portrays political competition as a dramatic confrontation between opposing identity groups. Such narratives often simplify complex political processes by reducing them to emotionally engaging stories involving heroes, villains, and victims. This narrative simplification makes political content more accessible and shareable within digital platforms, thereby increasing its potential reach and influence.

The thematic structure identified in the analysis indicates that identity narratives frequently revolve around recurring themes such as religious authenticity, cultural loyalty, national unity, and moral integrity. These themes function as interpretive frameworks that guide how audiences understand political events. When repeated across multiple digital platforms and messages, such themes can gradually shape collective perceptions of political reality. The repetition of thematic frames across different sources contributes to the normalization of particular interpretations of political issues.

Rhetorical structures also play an important role in reinforcing identity-based framing within digital discourse. The analysis reveals the frequent use of metaphors, emotional language, symbolic imagery, and identity labels to emphasize particular meanings. For example, political actors may be described using labels associated with religious devotion or cultural loyalty, while opponents may be characterized through negative stereotypes or symbolic representations that evoke distrust or fear. These rhetorical strategies are particularly effective in digital environments where attention spans are limited and emotionally engaging content tends to spread more rapidly.

The influence of algorithmic systems further amplifies the effects of framing in digital political communication. Social media algorithms prioritize content that generates high levels of engagement, such as likes, shares, and comments. Identity-based narratives often generate strong emotional reactions, making them more likely to be promoted by algorithmic recommendation systems. As a result, identity frames may be repeatedly exposed to users within echo chambers where alternative perspectives are less visible. This process reinforces existing beliefs and contributes to the intensification of political polarization. Research on digital political communication has demonstrated that algorithmic amplification can significantly increase the visibility and influence of identity-based narratives in online political discourse (Ate et al., 2024).

The findings of this study suggest that the construction of identity narratives in digital electoral controversies represents a complex interaction between communicative strategies, media structures, and technological systems. Political actors strategically frame issues to mobilize support and influence public perception, while digital platforms provide the infrastructure that enables these narratives to spread rapidly across large audiences. At the same time, audiences actively participate in the circulation and reinterpretation of these narratives through commenting, sharing, and remixing content. This interactive dynamic transforms digital political discourse into a highly participatory process where narratives are continuously contested and renegotiated.

The implications of these findings extend beyond the specific context of electoral controversies. The widespread use of identity-based framing in digital political communication raises important questions regarding the quality of democratic deliberation in contemporary societies. When political discourse becomes dominated by identity narratives that emphasize group differences and moral polarization, the possibility of rational dialogue and consensus-building may be reduced. Instead of fostering constructive debate about policy solutions, digital political communication may increasingly reinforce social divisions and ideological polarization.

Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that digital media also provide opportunities for alternative narratives that challenge dominant frames and promote more inclusive forms of political discourse. Civil society organizations, independent journalists, and digital literacy initiatives play important roles in countering disinformation and encouraging critical engagement with online content. Strengthening digital literacy among citizens can help audiences recognize framing strategies and evaluate political information more critically.

Overall, the analysis conducted in this study demonstrates that framing processes play a crucial role in shaping the dynamics of digital political discourse during electoral controversies. Through the combined analytical frameworks of Entman and Pan and Kosicki, it becomes evident that identity narratives related to SARA are constructed through systematic patterns of problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and treatment recommendation, as well as through specific syntactic, script, thematic, and rhetorical structures. These framing mechanisms influence how audiences interpret political events and contribute to the formation of public perceptions in digital environments. Understanding these processes is therefore essential for analyzing the broader dynamics of political communication in contemporary democracies and for developing strategies to promote more inclusive and constructive digital public discourse.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study examined the dynamics of digital political discourse surrounding SARA-related narratives in electoral controversies through a framing analysis approach. The findings demonstrate that social media platforms have become central arenas for political communication where narratives related to ethnicity, religion, race, and inter-group relations are strategically constructed and disseminated to shape public opinion. The framing process plays a crucial role in determining how political issues are interpreted by audiences, particularly during highly competitive electoral periods.

The analysis reveals that SARA narratives are frequently framed through three dominant patterns: identity mobilisation, moral polarisation, and emotional amplification. Identity mobilisation occurs when political actors or supporters emphasise religious, ethnic, or cultural identities to strengthen group solidarity and political alignment. Moral polarisation emerges when political discourse portrays certain political actors as morally superior while delegitimising opponents through identity-based accusations. Emotional amplification further intensifies these narratives by spreading provocative or sensational messages that trigger strong emotional responses among digital audiences.

These framing patterns contribute to the rapid circulation of polarising narratives across digital platforms, facilitated by algorithm-driven information flows and networked communication structures. As a result, digital political discourse often becomes fragmented and conflictual, potentially undermining social cohesion and democratic deliberation. The findings highlight that the problem is not merely the presence of identity narratives but the strategic framing processes that transform these narratives into instruments of political contestation.

From a broader perspective, this research underscores the importance of strengthening digital literacy, ethical political communication, and regulatory frameworks to mitigate the risks of identity-based polarisation in online political discourse. Democratic institutions, civil society organisations, and digital platforms must collaborate to promote responsible political communication that respects diversity and social harmony.

Ultimately, understanding the framing mechanisms of SARA narratives provides valuable insights for policymakers, scholars, and practitioners seeking to foster healthier digital political ecosystems and safeguard democratic processes in increasingly digitised societies.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

Future research should explore the integration of computational social science methods, such as big data analytics, machine learning, and network analysis, to map the large-scale circulation of identity-based political narratives across digital platforms. Combining qualitative framing analysis with quantitative digital trace data would allow researchers to identify patterns of narrative diffusion, algorithmic amplification, and coordinated political messaging in real time. In addition, comparative cross-national studies could provide deeper insights into how identity politics operates in different democratic contexts, particularly in multicultural societies where ethnic and religious diversity intersects with electoral competition. Such interdisciplinary approaches would significantly contribute to developing evidence-based policy frameworks aimed at mitigating digital polarisation and strengthening democratic resilience in the era of algorithm-driven political communication.

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