



Prabowo's Victory: How Influencers Shaped the 2024 Election

Nugraha Surya,<sup>1</sup> Muhammad Handzalah Ridwan,<sup>2</sup> Mardana Fahriza,<sup>3</sup> Lisnarini Naurah\*<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup>Faculty of Communications, Universitas Padjadjaran, Pangandaran, Indonesia.

<sup>4</sup> Faculty of Communications, Padjadjaran University, Bandung, Indonesia.

\* Corresponding Author, Email: [naurah@unpad.ac.id](mailto:naurah@unpad.ac.id)

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p><b>Keywords:</b></p> <p>Communications; Influencer; President; Politics.</p>	<p>This research investigates the role of influencers in political communication, particularly in the success of Prabowo-Gibran during the 2024 Presidential Election. The study addresses the increasing impact of social media personalities on political campaigns. Through qualitative analysis, it explores the strategies influencers use to influence public opinion and rally support for political figures. The results show that influencers serve as intermediaries, bridging the gap between the government and the public while also promoting greater public accountability. Additionally, their ability to engage audiences through relatable and emotionally charged content plays a significant role in shaping public views of candidates. This research underscores the evolving relationship between digital platforms and political processes, highlighting the importance of balancing popularity with expertise in governance.</p> <p><b>Contribution:</b> The study also reveals the importance of relatable, emotionally charged content in shaping public perceptions of political candidates, underscoring the increasing significance of digital platforms in political processes and the need to balance popularity with expertise in governance.</p>
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1. INTRODUCTION

In the current era, digital technology has become an integral and inseparable part of human life. Wherever and whenever digital technology fills every aspect of human existence. The evolution of media has pushed print media to adapt to the times, transforming into modern media, commonly referred to as social media (Liedfray, 2022). In reality, social media refers to networks of interpersonal interactions that utilize the internet as a replacement for the emergence of new communication channels. These networks allow users to communicate with one another in real time and access a variety of information (Illahi et al., 2020). The growth of social media as a platform for sharing political, social, and informational content has made it an effective tool to reach various segments of Indonesian society (Dhara et al., 2020). Public opinion in society can be influenced by social media, which has a significant impact on political life. The information provided by the media to its audience is not just information flowing in and out but also has the power to influence an individual's political behavior, including policymakers. Especially with content created by influencers on social media, who have a considerable influence on their followers.

An influencer is a social media user who has followers on social media platforms due to their expertise in a specific topic and the authentic relationships they maintain with their audience. Because of their position, authority, expertise, or relationship with their audience, influencers have the ability to influence others' decisions. It is important to note that these individuals are social assets that can be utilized to achieve certain objectives (Kádeková & Holienčinová, 2018). An activist with good connections, influence, proactivity, and trendsetting abilities for their followers can also be considered an influencer. Social media influencers are considered opinion leaders on social media platforms about specific topics of interest, such as fashion, food, lifestyle, or beauty. Because followers have a positive opinion of influencers, their messages are quite successful in generating the desired brand impact (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Social media users generally view influencers as relatable, authentic, and comparable to themselves (Ki et al., 2020). Influencers leverage their social power to promote various goals, which may include advertising products for a brand they collaborate with, but they may also decide to support social and political causes.

When it comes to politics, things become more complicated. When influencers talk about politics, they engage in a "gray area between the market and democracy". A "lack of systematic empirical evidence" regarding political influencers—a gap this special issue seeks to address (Riedl et al., 2021). Political figures often use influencers to advance their agendas as they try to attract voters (Glazer & Wells, 2019). However, it remains unclear who qualifies as a political influencer. When journalists express their opinions on political issues on social media, some refer to them as political influencers (Peres-Neto, 2022). Politicians highly skilled in using social media have also been referred to as political influencers. However, other research has shown how certain populist approaches by politicians resemble those of social media influencers. Most importantly, social media users without institutional backgrounds whose fame is built through platforms are also categorized as political influencers.

Influencers are at the forefront of exploring the capabilities of new platforms and testing their boundaries. In the present reality in Indonesia, many influencers have entered the political realm, even holding positions as presidential special staff. Therefore, the ability of political influencers to navigate the complex dynamics of their respective platforms makes them ideal cases for studying the changing ecology of political media. As is known, the current president, Prabowo Subianto, is supported by many influencers in Indonesia. From Raffi Ahmad, who is now a presidential special envoy, to Yovie Widiyanto, who is a presidential special staff. Below are some artists who support Prabowo-Gibran in the 2024 Presidential Election:

Table 1. Influencers Supporting Prabowo 2024

Influencer's Name	Amounts of Followers	Platform
Raffi Ahmad and Nagita Slavina	76,2 millions	Instagram
Deddy Corbuzier	12,2 millions	Instagram
Baim Wong	21,3 millions	Instagram
Nikita Mirzani	15,3 millions	Instagram
Celine Evangelista	6,9 millions	Instagram

(Source: Researcher's Analysis, 2024)

The research is conducted to explore the phenomenon of influencers in political communication. This is crucial given that the presence of influencers represents a new dynamic in the political world. Specifically, this study aims to understand the communication strategies employed by influencers in successfully supporting the Prabowo-Gibran pair to win the 2024 Presidential Election.

## 2. METHOD

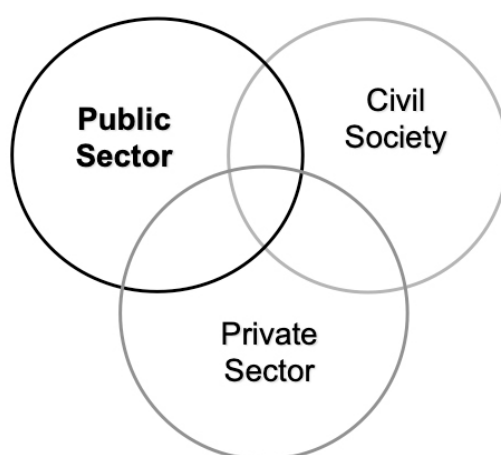
This study uses a qualitative method, which is a powerful approach for exploring and understanding the phenomenon of what is experienced by research subjects, such as behaviors, perceptions, motivations, actions, and others, holistically and descriptively in the form of words and language, within a specific, natural context. It also utilizes various natural methods to collect relevant data comprehensively (Moleong, 2018). This method is suitable for examining complex phenomena by considering various factors that influence behavior and social interactions (Rahman, 2025). The approach is appropriate for research that highlights the analysis of the influencer phenomenon in political communication, which beliefs, viewpoints, and social backgrounds can influence. The theory used in this study is the theory of opinion leadership, which is a conceptual perspective used by communication scholars to study influencers (Casero-Ripollés, 2020). According to the classical theory of the two-step flow of communication and opinion leaders, influencers are often viewed as individuals who resemble opinion leaders and use informational communication to influence others' opinions (Rogers et al., 2014).

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Phenomena and Strategies of Influencers in Political Communication

In political systems, there exists a triangular power structure comprising the public sector, private sector, and civil society. These three forces play significant roles in influencing policy-making (Susanto, 2022). The presence of influencers in the political realm is categorized under civil society due to their dominance over social media platforms, which has proven effective in shaping public opinion and influencing the political attitudes of their followers.

Figure 1. Triangle of Governance



(Source: Destatte, 2019)

In disseminating political information, influencers fulfill two primary functions. *First*, they facilitate communication between the public and the government by disseminating and interpreting government programs, making them easier for the public to understand (Ma'ruf, 2024). According to data from We Are Social, the number of active social media users in Indonesia reached 139 million as of January 2024, equivalent to 49.9% of the total population. Social media significantly influences how people receive circulating information, including political content. The presence of influencers on social media has a substantial impact on current Indonesian politics. This is due to the provocative-reactive and discursive nature of the messages conveyed by influencers to netizens (Jati, 2016). As a result, with so many people using social media, influencers play a crucial role in contemporary politics. Governments can collaborate with influencers to disseminate information effectively.

Second, influencers strengthen the mechanism of checks and balances by acting as a counterbalance to opposition forces (Chan, 2024). Checks and balances are a fundamental principle of *trias politica*, which must exist in any democratic nation. This principle ensures equality and interrelation among the executive, legislative, and judicial branches, maintaining balance and control to prevent abuse of power. Influencers possess the capability to oversee governmental performance and represent the voices of the public or their supporters, thereby influencing political decisions. They also contribute to the processes of feedback, monitoring, evaluation, and review of government policies, aligned with the authority of respective policymakers (Ma'ruf, 2024). Consequently, policy implementation can proceed smoothly in subsequent periods. Influencers serve as a medium for the public to express their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with political decisions.

The political communication strategies employed by influencers include image management, which refers to how individuals present themselves in front of others and how they shape others' impressions to align with their desired image (De Munter, 2023). The emergence of social media has introduced new dynamics in politics, as influencers leverage these platforms to freely implement political image management without relying on journalists. Thus, content that previously may not have met traditional news values or failed to attract journalistic attention can now still reach the public effectively. As an example, on an Instagram post from the account @raffinagita1717, Raffi Ahmad is seen wearing a light blue shirt and displaying the two-finger gesture.

Figure 2. Post on Instagram Account @raffinagita1717



(Source: Instagram account @raffinagita1717 on February 14, 2024)

The post illustrates that Raffi Ahmad positions himself as a supporter of the Prabowo-Gibran ticket in the 2024 Presidential Election. The post is accompanied by the song titled "*Doa Untuk Pemimpin Negeri*" (Prayer for the Nation's Leader), a composition created by Indonesian artists who are part of Prabowo-Gibran's campaign team. The inclusion of this song conveys Raffi Ahmad's message of hope for Prabowo to become the President of Indonesia. In the same post, Raffi Ahmad's followers also expressed their support for Prabowo-Gibran as Indonesia's next President and Vice President.

Figure 3. Comments on Instagram Post @raffinagita1717



(Source: Instagram account @raffinagita1717 on February 14, 2024)

The post by Raffi Ahmad illustrates his position as a supporter of the Prabowo-Gibran ticket in the 2024 Presidential Election. By including the song titled "Prayer for the Nation's Leader", composed by prominent Indonesian artists affiliated with Prabowo-Gibran's campaign team, the post conveys a carefully crafted political message. The use of an emotionally charged song reflects an effective strategy to appeal to the sentiments of the audience, amplifying the message of hope and trust in Prabowo's leadership potential.

The comments section of the post further underscores its impact, as Raffi Ahmad's followers publicly expressed their alignment and support for the Prabowo-Gibran campaign. This engagement highlights the dual role influencers play, not just as advocates but also as mediators between political figures and the electorate. The strategy taps into parasocial relationships—the perception of a close bond or familiarity that followers feel toward influencers—which, according to Horton and Wohl's (1956) theory, can significantly affect opinion formation and political behavior (Cheng et al., 2024).

Furthermore, this phenomenon aligns with contemporary studies on influencer-driven political communication. For example, a 2023 study by Smith et al. on social media influencers in Southeast Asian politics emphasizes how influencers can amplify political messaging and foster engagement among younger demographics (Smith & Singh, 2024). With over 139 million active social media users in Indonesia as of January 2024 (Social & Hootsuite, 2024), this approach resonates strongly with a digitally native audience. Raffi Ahmad, having one of the largest Instagram followings in Indonesia, exemplifies this trend, leveraging his platform to extend the reach of the Prabowo-Gibran campaign.

These strategies also invite critical discourse. Scholars like Casero-Ripollés (2020) warn that the increasing reliance on influencers for political messaging risks oversimplifying complex policy debates, reducing them to emotionally driven narratives. Additionally, the ethical implications of influencers endorsing candidates without transparent disclosures of their affiliations or motives remain an area of concern (Casero-Ripollés, 2020). Raffi Ahmad's Instagram post demonstrates the powerful intersection of celebrity influence, digital platforms, and political communication in modern election campaigns. As the landscape of political engagement evolves, further research is needed to understand the long-term implications of such strategies on democratic discourse and governance.

### The Involvement of Influencers in Prabowo's Success in the 2024 Presidential Election

The success of the Prabowo-Gibran ticket in the 2024 Presidential Election is inextricably linked to the significant role played by social media influencers. These influencers have emerged as key figures in shaping public opinion, leveraging their extensive follower bases and the considerable support



they receive from their audiences. Their impact is rooted in their ability to disseminate information, share personal thoughts, and endorse political candidates, creating a powerful ripple effect that significantly influences their followers' perceptions.

In the context of political communication, influencers are increasingly perceived as more effective than traditional media in swaying public opinion. This enhanced influence stems from several factors, including the intimate and dynamic connections they build with their audiences through direct messages, live sessions, and comment exchanges. These interactions foster trust, making followers more receptive to the influencers' recommendations and opinions. As noted by Castells (2015), the advent of networked communication has shifted power dynamics, enabling individuals with social capital to exert influence comparable to that of traditional institutions (Cheng et al., 2024).

Moreover, influencers curate communities of like-minded individuals, positioning themselves as credible authorities or experts in their respective niches. This perceived authority amplifies their ability to persuade their followers, particularly when discussing political matters (Castells, 2015). The trust placed in influencers is further reinforced by their authenticity and relatability, which are often viewed as lacking in traditional political figures or media outlets. These characteristics allow influencers to bridge the gap between political narratives and the everyday experiences of their audiences, thus creating a sense of personal investment in the political process (Parmelee et al., 2023).

A critical aspect of an influencer's power lies in their ability to spotlight issues and make them resonate with a broader audience. Social media platforms and their algorithms play a pivotal role in this process, prioritizing highly engaging content—measured through likes, shares, and comments (Rathje et al., 2024). As a result, influencers can drive topics to go viral, exponentially increasing their reach and impact. This virality ensures that political messaging can bypass traditional gatekeepers, allowing candidates like Prabowo to connect directly with potential voters in a highly personalized manner.

A compelling example of this phenomenon is Raffi Ahmad's Instagram live session with Prabowo on January 11, 2024. Despite being an impromptu broadcast with no prior announcement, the session attracted an impressive 42,100 viewers. During the live session, Raffi Ahmad shared his personal impressions of Prabowo, emphasizing how much he witnessed the public's admiration for the presidential candidate. While his comments were subjective and based on personal experience, they had a profound effect on shaping the opinions of his vast follower base. This illustrates how influencers can leverage their personal narratives to humanize political figures, making them more relatable to the general public (Aboelenien et al., 2023).

The effectiveness of influencer engagement in the Prabowo-Gibran campaign can also be analyzed through the lens of international political trends. In the United States, for instance, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's strategic use of social media influencers during her congressional campaign in 2018 demonstrated the transformative power of this approach (Rodriguez & Goretti, 2022). By collaborating with influencers who aligned with her progressive agenda, Ocasio-Cortez was able to amplify her message and mobilize a diverse coalition of supporters. Similarly, in the United Kingdom, Boris Johnson's 2019 election campaign leveraged digital personalities to disseminate key policy messages, effectively reaching younger demographics who were traditionally disengaged from politics (Chadwick, 2017).

The international success stories underscore the growing importance of social media influencers as intermediaries in political campaigns (Goodwin et al., 2023). They highlight a shift in the political communication landscape where authenticity, relatability, and digital savviness often trump traditional political strategies. This trend aligns with the broader global movement toward participatory politics, where individuals feel empowered to engage in the democratic process through digital platforms.

In Indonesia, the role of influencers in political campaigns is particularly pronounced due to the high penetration of social media. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube serve as primary sources of information for millions of Indonesians, especially among the youth (Widodo et al., 2022). This demographic, which comprises a significant portion of the electorate, is highly receptive to the content shared by influencers they trust. The Prabowo-Gibran campaign's strategic collaboration with prominent influencers reflects a keen understanding of this dynamic.

Beyond individual endorsements, influencers also contribute to the campaign's broader narrative by shaping public discourse on critical issues. For example, through coordinated hashtag campaigns

and viral challenges, influencers have successfully highlighted key policy priorities of the Prabowo-Gibran ticket, such as economic development, education reform, and national security. These efforts not only amplify the campaign's message but also create a sense of community among supporters, fostering a shared sense of purpose and identity (Kwon & Ha, 2023).

However, the reliance on influencers in political campaigns is not without its challenges. Critics argue that this approach risks trivializing complex political issues by reducing them to simplistic soundbites and viral content. There are also concerns about the authenticity of influencer endorsements, particularly when financial incentives are involved. As noted by Abidin (2020), the commercialization of influencer culture raises ethical questions about transparency and accountability (Abidin et al., 2020). To address these concerns, the Prabowo-Gibran campaign has emphasized the importance of aligning with influencers whose values and principles resonate genuinely with their platform, thus ensuring that their messaging remains credible and authentic.

Furthermore, the influence of social media extends beyond national boundaries, as diaspora communities play a vital role in shaping perceptions of the Prabowo-Gibran ticket abroad. Indonesian influencers based overseas have utilized their platforms to engage with expatriate voters, fostering a sense of connection to the homeland and encouraging participation in the electoral process. This transnational dimension of influencer engagement underscores the interconnectedness of modern political campaigns, where digital tools transcend geographical boundaries to mobilize global networks of supporters (Kulachai, 2023).

Looking ahead, the integration of influencers into political campaigns is likely to become even more sophisticated. Advances in artificial intelligence and data analytics offer new opportunities for targeting specific voter segments with tailored content. For instance, predictive algorithms can analyze user behavior to identify potential swing voters, enabling campaigns to deploy influencers strategically to maximize impact. However, these developments also raise important ethical considerations regarding privacy and the potential for manipulation, necessitating robust regulatory frameworks to ensure fair and transparent electoral processes.

Figure 4. Instagram Live Streaming on the Account @raffinagita1717



(Source: Instagram account @raffinagita1717 on February 14, 2024)

The image captures a pivotal moment where the convergence of influencer credibility and political messaging reached a large audience, exemplifying the growing significance of parasocial relationships.

These are one-sided connections where followers feel a personal bond with influencers, enhancing the latter's persuasive power. Raffi Ahmad, as Indonesia's most-followed Instagram user, successfully amplified the Prabowo-Gibran campaign, showcasing the transformative potential of influencers in modern political landscapes.

The integration of live streaming and real-time engagement represents a broader shift in political communication strategies, aligning with the habits and preferences of digitally native younger generations (Okonkwo et al., 2023). This approach not only increases accessibility but also fosters a sense of immediacy and authenticity, which resonate deeply with social media users. However, this phenomenon also raises critical questions about the implications of relying on influencers for political advocacy. While their ability to engage and mobilize large audiences is undeniable, concerns about the depth of their understanding of complex political issues and their motivations for endorsements persist (Almakaty, 2024). This aligns with the broader discourse in political communication theory, which emphasizes the need to balance popularity with competence in political decision-making.

Recent studies corroborate these findings, highlighting the instrumental role of influencers in political campaigns worldwide. Research by Enli (2020) on "personalized politics" underscores how political figures and their endorsers craft personal narratives to build emotional connections with audiences (Enli, 2020). Similarly, a 2024 study by Zhang and Vos on "digital campaigning" reveals how the interplay between influencers and algorithmic amplification reshapes political outreach (Zhang & Vos, 2024). These insights further illustrate the evolving dynamics of political communication in the digital age. In conclusion, while the involvement of influencers like Raffi Ahmad contributed significantly to the success of the Prabowo-Gibran team in the 2024 Presidential Election, it also underscores the importance of critically evaluating the broader implications of this strategy. The rise of influencer-driven politics signals a need for campaigns to carefully balance authenticity, reach, and informed discourse to ensure that democratic processes remain robust and inclusive.

The Instagram posts by influencers Baim Wong and Nikita Mirzani serve as compelling examples of how social media personalities shape political discourse and influence public opinion during elections. Both posts effectively utilize emotional, symbolic, and non-verbal communication strategies, which enhance their persuasive power among followers.

Figure 5. Instagram Post by Baim Wong



(Source: Instagram account @baimwong on February 10, 2024)

Baim Wong's social media post on February 10, 2024, in support of the Prabowo-Gibran pair, exemplifies the intricate dynamics of personalized political communication in the digital age. In the post,



Wong uses an emotional appeal to endorse Prabowo's leadership, emphasizing his compassion and genuine concern for the people. His caption, "In front of my eyes, there is a leader who truly cares for his people," not only highlights Prabowo's perceived character but also serves to create an intimate narrative that resonates with Wong's extensive follower base. This approach leverages the power of authenticity and relatability, key components in shaping public perception in contemporary political campaigns (Baqir, 2023).

The strategic use of emotional framing in Wong's post reflects broader trends in social media's role in modern politics. According to Enli (2020), emotional appeals are a cornerstone of personalized political communication, enabling political figures and their endorsers to forge deeper connections with audiences (Enli, 2020). By framing Prabowo as a compassionate and relatable leader, Wong's message transcends political rhetoric, entering the realm of personal storytelling that appeals to the emotions of his followers. This technique is particularly effective in Indonesia, where personal and familial narratives often carry significant weight in influencing public opinion.

Furthermore, Wong's endorsement is amplified by his massive social media following, which creates a ripple effect across digital platforms. With millions of followers, Wong's post has the potential to reach audiences far beyond his immediate circle, capitalizing on the viral nature of social media. This amplification is not merely a function of numbers but also of the trust his audience places in him (Moran & Nechushtai, 2023). As a public figure known for his authenticity, Wong's opinions carry substantial credibility, making his endorsement a powerful tool in shaping public discourse around the Prabowo-Gibran ticket.

From a broader perspective, Wong's post aligns with global trends in the use of social media for political campaigning. In the United States, for example, the 2016 and 2020 presidential campaigns highlighted the critical role of influencers in shaping voter perceptions. Figures like Kim Kardashian and Taylor Swift, who endorsed political candidates and causes, demonstrated how celebrity endorsements could sway public opinion and mobilize voter bases. Similarly, in Europe, social media platforms have become battlegrounds for political messaging, with politicians and their supporters leveraging emotional narratives to engage with younger, tech-savvy demographics (Chadwick, 2017).

The interplay between Wong's emotional appeal and the broader political context also underscores the significance of cultural and social factors in shaping political communication strategies. In Indonesia, the cultural emphasis on communal values and mutual support makes emotional appeals particularly resonant. By highlighting Prabowo's compassion and dedication to the people, Wong's post taps into these deeply rooted cultural norms, enhancing its persuasive impact. This strategy mirrors successful campaigns in other parts of the world, where cultural values are integral to crafting effective political messages (Joyce et al., 2024).

However, the effectiveness of Wong's endorsement also raises critical questions about the ethics and implications of influencer-driven political communication. While his post may humanize Prabowo and make him more relatable, it also underscores the potential for social media to blur the lines between genuine advocacy and strategic messaging. This phenomenon is not unique to Indonesia; globally, the rise of influencer endorsements in politics has sparked debates about transparency, accountability, and the commodification of political messages (Hudders et al., 2021).

For instance, in the United Kingdom, the use of social media influencers during the Brexit referendum highlighted both the opportunities and challenges of this approach. Influencers played a pivotal role in shaping public opinion, but their involvement also raised concerns about misinformation and the ethical responsibilities of public figures in political discourse. Similarly, in the United States, the use of targeted emotional appeals during elections has led to increased scrutiny of social media platforms and their role in facilitating political manipulation (Tufekci, 2017).

In the Indonesian context, Wong's post can be seen as a microcosm of these broader dynamics. While his endorsement may appear authentic and heartfelt, it also serves as a strategic tool in the Prabowo-Gibran campaign's broader effort to engage with younger, digital-native voters. This duality highlights the complex interplay between authenticity and strategy in contemporary political communication, where personal narratives are often used to mask underlying agendas (Browse et al., 2019).

To further analyze Wong's post, it is essential to consider its potential impact on voter behavior. Research on political communication suggests that emotional appeals can significantly influence voter perceptions, particularly among undecided or apathetic voters (Passyn et al., 2024). By portraying Prabowo as a compassionate and relatable leader, Wong's message may help to mobilize these voters, bridging the gap between political rhetoric and personal connection. This effect is particularly pronounced in the context of social media, where the immediacy and intimacy of platforms like Instagram and Twitter create a sense of closeness between public figures and their audiences (Papacharissi, 2015).

Moreover, Wong's post illustrates the power of parasocial relationships (PSR) in shaping political attitudes. Parasocial relationships, or the one-sided connections that audiences form with media personalities, can significantly influence how individuals perceive and respond to political messages. By leveraging his parasocial relationship with his followers, Wong effectively positions himself as a trusted intermediary between Prabowo and the public, enhancing the credibility and impact of his endorsement (Horton & Richard Wohl, 1956).

Figure 6. Instagram Post by Nikita Mirzani



(Source: Instagram account account @nikitamirzanimawardi\_172, on February 14, 2024)

Nikita Mirzani's Instagram post on February 14, 2024, serves as an example of how social media influencers can subtly yet effectively shape political perceptions. By wearing a blue shirt—symbolic of Candidate Pair 02's campaign color—and posing with a peace sign, Mirzani communicates alignment with the political message without directly endorsing the candidate. This nuanced use of non-verbal communication highlights how influencers can influence their followers' political perspectives through visual and symbolic cues.

Non-verbal communication, particularly in political campaigns, plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion (Štěpánková, 2021). Mirzani's choice of clothing color and pose functions as a visual shorthand. The blue shirt is a widely recognized symbol associated with Candidate Pair 02's campaign, and the peace sign can be interpreted as support for their message of stability and harmony. Such subtleties are not accidental but deliberate acts of signaling designed to resonate with her audience. Symbols in political communication serve to simplify complex political narratives, allowing individuals to identify and connect with a campaign's core values quickly (Prior, 2024). This phenomenon reflects broader

global trends where influencers leverage their platforms to engage in political discourse without overt declarations.

The inclusion of her caption, "Don't abstain, your vote determines Indonesia's future," further reinforces the political undertone of her post. While the statement appears neutral on the surface, it carries an implicit endorsement by aligning with the values promoted by the Prabowo-Gibran ticket. Encouraging democratic participation is a cornerstone of their campaign, and Mirzani's emphasis on voting subtly aligns her message with their agenda. This approach mirrors strategies employed internationally, where influencers integrate political messaging into lifestyle content to maximize reach and minimize polarizing reactions (Duan & Qutayan, 2024). For instance, in the United States, influencers during the 2020 presidential elections used similar tactics to advocate for voter turnout, blending fashion, pop culture, and civic duty into cohesive narratives that resonated with their followers (Miller et al., 2022).

Analyzing this strategy within the context of Indonesia's political climate reveals its effectiveness in engaging younger, digitally active voters. Indonesia's youth, who constitute a significant portion of the electorate, are highly active on social media platforms, making them a critical demographic for political campaigns. A 2023 study by Hootsuite and We Are Social indicated that over 61% of Indonesia's population are active social media users, with Instagram being one of the most popular platforms. Influencers like Nikita Mirzani, with millions of followers, act as bridges between political campaigns and this key demographic. Their ability to embed political messages into relatable and visually appealing content increases the likelihood of resonance and engagement among younger voters (Štěpánková, 2021).

Both Baim Wong and Nikita Mirzani's posts underscore the growing significance of influencers in political campaigns, particularly in their ability to craft messages that appeal to the emotions and visual sensibilities of their followers. By engaging in emotional storytelling and symbolic gestures, these influencers engage in a form of political communication that transcends traditional campaigning. This form of communication resonates deeply with audiences, particularly younger, digitally native generations, who often feel more connected to influencers than to traditional political figures or institutions. Social media algorithms further amplify this effect, ensuring that such content reaches a broad and diverse audience, enhancing its viral potential (Zhang & Vos, 2024).

While these posts demonstrate the effectiveness of emotional and visual political communication strategies, they also raise important questions about the depth of political engagement among followers. The reliance on symbolic and emotional appeals can sometimes reduce complex political issues to oversimplified messages, which might not fully inform voters about the nuances of a candidate's platform or policies. Nonetheless, the posts by Baim Wong and Nikita Mirzani exemplify the evolving role of influencers in modern political campaigns, where emotional resonance and symbolic messaging play a crucial role in shaping the political landscape.

Influencers are social media users who have cultivated a dedicated following through their expertise and authentic engagement. Their perceived authority and relatability allow them to effectively shape opinions and drive decisions (Lou & Yuan, 2019). They leverage this influence to promote a range of objectives, from advertising to advocating for social and political causes (Kádeková & Holienčinová, 2018).

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The involvement of influencers in political communication during the 2024 Presidential Election not only strengthens candidates' images but also serves as a strategic component to capture public attention. The inclusion of influencers, some even appointed as special presidential staff, creates a new dynamic in Indonesia's political communication landscape. This phenomenon can be seen as a strategic move to engage younger generations who are more influenced by influencers than traditional experts or politicians. In this context, influencers become symbols for the younger demographic, who are more accustomed to the digital world and online social interactions. However, from the perspective of political communication theory, this trend raises concerns regarding professionalism and competence in governmental decision-making. The appointment of influencers to strategic positions poses the risk that popularity might become the primary criterion, overshadowing the need for

competence and experience crucial for governance tasks. This aligns with the theory of opinion leadership, which posits that an influencer's power lies in their appeal on social media and their relationship with the audience rather than in-depth expertise in a specific field. Overall, Prabowo Subianto's success in the 2024 election, aided by influencers, demonstrates the effectiveness of this approach in reaching a broad audience, particularly the youth. On the other hand, it underscores the importance of balancing popularity and competence in political decision-making, ensuring that resulting policies are not only popular but also deeply rooted in expertise.

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