THE ROLE OF POLITICAL INFLUENCERS AND DIGITAL CAMPAIGNERS IN BUILDING LONG-TERM VOTER LOYALTY IN INDONESIA AFTER THE 2024 ELECTION

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Abstract
This study aims to understand the role of political influencers and digital campaigners in shaping long-term loyalty among young Indonesian voters post-2024 elections. Using a qualitative approach through case study methods and digital content analysis, this study examines the communication styles, political narratives, and personal interactions of influencers through social media in shaping sustainable political perceptions. The analysis shows that political influencers are able to form significant emotional and cognitive attachments with voters through educational and interactive content. The resulting voter loyalty depends not only on affiliation with political parties or political ideology, but also on the credibility and consistency of the influencer's communication. These findings demonstrate a shift in the dynamics of contemporary political communication and the importance of strengthening digital political literacy post-campaign.
Keywords: *political influencer, digital campaigner, electoral loyalty, political communication, social media*

Abstrak
Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memahami peran *influencer* politik dan *digital campaigner* dalam membentuk loyalitas jangka panjang di kalangan pemilih pemula Indonesia pasca-Pemilu 2024. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif melalui metode studi kasus dan analisis konten digital, penelitian ini memperhatikan gaya komunikasi, narasi politik, dan interaksi personal *influencer* melalui media sosial dalam membentuk persepsi politik yang berkesinambungan. Hasil analisis memperlihatkan bahwa *influencer* politik mampu membentuk keterikatan emosional dan kognitif yang signifikan terhadap pemilih melalui konten-konten edukatif dan interaktif. Loyalitas pemilih yang terbentuk tidak hanya bergantung pada afiliasi terhadap partai politik ataupun ideologi politik, tetapi juga pada kredibilitas dan konsistensi komunikasi dari *influencer*. Temuan ini menunjukkan adanya pergeseran dalam dinamika komunikasi politik kontemporer dan pentingnya memperkuat literasi politik digital pasca-kampanye.
Kata kunci: influencer politik, digital campaigner, loyalitas elektoral, komunikasi politik, media sosial

I. INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has significantly changed the landscape of political communication, including in Indonesia. One such phenomenon is the 2024 General
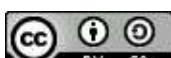
Election in Indonesia, which is demonstrated by the increasing role of political influencers and digital campaigners in shaping public opinion and constituents, as well as building electoral loyalty with constituents, particularly among first-time voters. Political influencers are able to reach the public through social media with a more personal, participatory, and emotional approach, differing from conventional political communication or open campaigns, which tend to be one-way and formal (Abidin, 2016).

Political influencers, whether public figures, activists, or independent content creators, can play a strategic role in conveying political messages to a wide audience, particularly first-time voters. Through digital platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter (now known as X), influencers convey political narratives in a personal, informal, and sometimes satirical manner, which is more easily digested and accepted by constituents than formal communications from political institutions, such as political parties or candidates participating in the election. With their large followings and ability to influence and sway public opinion, influencers are often more trusted than party spokespersons or political elites.

According to Horton and Wohl (1956), the relationship between the public and public figures in the media creates a parasocial interaction, a false sense of closeness that feels real to the audience (Horton & Wohl, 1956). This is reinforced by the influencers' more casual and responsive communication style, creating the illusion of closeness and representation that their followers on social media believe in. In the context of political communication, the approaches employed by these influencers indirectly shape the trust, preferences, and loyalty of voters on an ongoing basis (Dalton & Wattenberg, 2000).

Furthermore, voter loyalty is a crucial aspect of the democratic process because it is directly related to the long-term stability of a political party's vote share, eliminating dependence on floating votes. In this context, loyalty is not merely allegiance to a particular party or political figure, but also reflects the level of emotional closeness, trust, and political identification formed through repeated and consistent communication. The question is, are the interactions fostered by political influencers through digital content truly capable of generating long-term voter loyalty, or do they merely create short-term, superficial effects?

This phenomenon is increasingly relevant amidst the increasing number of first-time voters and the dominant use of social media as a primary source of political information. However, so far, there has been little research examining the relationship between the role of

political influencers and the formation of electoral loyalty in the post-2024 Indonesian election context. Therefore, this research is crucial to illustrate how the dynamics of digital political communication can shape deeper and more sustainable electoral bonds.

II. THEORETICAL STUDIES

2.1 Political Communication Theory

Political communication is the process of exchanging information and messages between political actors and their audiences with the aim of influencing political perceptions, attitudes, and behavior. Lasswell defined political communication as the process of "who says what, in which channel, to whom, with what effect" (Lasswell, 1948). In the digital context, the political communication process is no longer one-way and formal, but rather horizontal and interactive.

Brian McNair (2011) states that political communication currently occurs within a fragmented mediascape, where non-state and non-party actors, such as influencers, are able to produce political meaning and hold significant positions among audiences (McNair, 2011). Influencers act as media producers, directing discourse, framing narratives, and even creating new agendas within mainstream politics in Indonesia.

Framing theory (Entman, 1993) is also relevant in the context of examining influencers within the framework of political communication on social media. Influencers select and present information from a particular perspective, indirectly shaping how their followers evaluate a political issue or political figure.

2.2 Voter Loyalty

Voter loyalty refers to the tendency of voters to consistently remain loyal to a single candidate, party, or political ideology over the long term. According to Dalton (2000), this loyalty encompasses not only stable political preferences but also affective or emotional and cognitive, or rational, dimensions.

In the context of modern democracies, which are rife with the personalization of politics, loyalty is not always built on party programs or ideologies, but can stem from positive perceptions of certain political figures whom the public perceives as close or relevant. In this regard, digital communication and the presence of political figures or influencers can trigger parasocial relationships (Horton & Wohl, 1956), namely, a pseudo-relationship between the public and political figures in the media that feels real and personal.

2.3 Political Influencers and Digital Campaigns

The term "political influencer" refers to someone who wields significant influence over opinion on digital platforms, either directly or indirectly, and is affiliated with a particular political party or candidate. Influencers can create political content in the form of images, videos, or text that is educational, satirical, or informative, typically with a personal, light-hearted, and easily digestible communication style.

According to Abidin (2016), the phenomenon of micro-celebrity and the attention economy on social media has shifted the logic of political authority, which should have been held solely by elites within political parties and the trias politica (political hierarchy). Credibility is no longer solely vested in the formal political elite, but also in popular figures who are able to connect with the public through authentic narratives.

In the context of social media campaigns, digital campaigners use digital platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and X to convey political messages, manage the image of political candidates, and build direct interactions with voters in elections. This strategy is considered more effective in reaching first-time voters who tend to be resistant to conventional political communication.

2.4 Previous Research

Several previous studies have also highlighted the influence of social media on first-time voter behavior. Research conducted by Lim (2020) shows that political campaigns on TikTok have a high emotional impact on first-time voters in Indonesia, but their impact on voters' political loyalty is still limited (Lim, 2020). Meanwhile, Nasrullah (2021) found that the relationship between social media engagement and political loyalty is volatile, meaning it depends on the consistency of communication and perceptions of the integrity of political figures or candidates running in elections (Nasrullah, 2015).

Research conducted by Setiawan and Kusumasari (2023) revealed that educational and participatory political content on social media tends to foster long-term loyalty compared to provocative or sensational content.

Another gap in the literature is research that explicitly links the role of political influencers to the formation of long-term voter loyalty in the post-2024 Indonesian election context. This research aims to address this.

III. RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 Research Approach

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study method to analyze in depth the role of political influencers in shaping voter loyalty. The qualitative approach is used in this study because the nature of the phenomenon being studied requires a contextual, narrative, and interpretive understanding of the meanings constructed through digital communication by influencers.

3.2 Research Objects and Subjects

1. Research Objects: Politically nuanced content created by political influencers on social media.

2. Research Subjects: Political influencers and their active followers.

3.3 Data Collection Techniques

1. Digital Content Analysis

Analyzing video content, captions, comments, and engagement (number of likes, shares, and reposts) from political influencer accounts.

Analysis Period: January to June 2025 (post-election period).

Analysis Focus: Communication style, narrative, framing, and follower responses.

2. In-depth Interviews

Conducted with:

a. Political influencers.

b. 5–10 active followers who demonstrate high levels of interaction with the political influencer.

c. Interview Objective: To explore followers' perceptions of political content, the relationship between followers and influencers, and the impact on followers' long-term political preferences.

3.4 Data Analysis Techniques

This study uses the interactive analysis model from Miles and Huberman (1994), which includes three stages in the interaction process between influencers and followers:

1. Data Reduction: selecting, focusing, and simplifying data from interviews and content observations.

2. Data Presentation: organizing data into themes and categories, such as forms of loyalty, types of communication, and follower-influencer relationships.

3. Conclusion Drawing and Verification: interpreting emerging meanings, linking them to theory, and verifying consistent patterns of findings.

3.5 Data Validity

To ensure data validity, source and method triangulation techniques were used:

a. Source triangulation: comparing information from influencers, followers/audiences, and observations of content created by influencers.

b. Method triangulation: combining content analysis with interviews.

In addition, the validation process was conducted through member checking, where preliminary results were reconfirmed with informants/followers to ensure accurate interpretation.

IV. RESEARCH RESULTS

4.1 Profile of Analyzed Political Influencers

Brief Profile of the @totalpolitikcom Account

1. Influencer: @totalpolitikcom (Instagram 324,000 followers and YouTube 774,000 subscribers)

2. Communication Style: Casual, educational, and occasionally satirical

3. Dominant Topics: Election system education, policy criticism, political figure profiles, 2024 elections

4. Engagement: Average 3,500 likes, 200 comments per video

Discussion:

@totalpolitikcom utilizes an easy-to-understand narrative style and everyday language to reach first-time voters. Visual and storytelling strategies are used to simplify complex issues. This supports Abidin's (2018) findings regarding the strategies of micro-celebrities on social media in building engagement.

Brief Profile of the @sewordofficial_ Account

1. Instagram Account: @sewordofficial_

2. Content Type: Infographics, political opinion, analysis of current issues

3. Active Platforms: Instagram, TikTok, and the seword.com blog channel

4. Communication Characteristics: Sharp editorials, tending to be pro-government, and responsive to viral issues

5. Audience Characteristics: Active voters, mostly aged 25–45, pro-national stability, digital media literate

6. Source Identity (simulation): Seword editorial content admin, with a background in journalism and political opinion.

Discussion:

This account tends to convey a structured and strong narrative to direct public opinion. They often frame issues from a firm ideological perspective, targeting contested issues such as identity politics, opposition figures, government performance, and nationalist narratives.

4.2 Political Communication Strategy on Social Media

Content:

1. Both accounts regularly upload 3-4 pieces of content per week.

2. Conveying messages using analogies from popular culture (movies, songs, memes).

3. Interactive: Responding to follower comments, creating polls, and live Q&As.

Discussion:

The interactive strategies of these two political influencer accounts create parasocial interactions (Horton & Wohl, 1956), where followers feel a personal connection with the influencer. This active engagement strengthens the persuasive power of each piece of content and increases trust, which forms the basis for affective loyalty.

4.3 Audience Perception and Engagement (Interview Results)

Interview results with Sigit, one of his followers:

"I like the way he explains politics, so I care more and know who to vote for. I used to abstain from voting, but after seeing his content, I started participating in political discussions."

Discussion:

The emotional and intellectual interactions built from educational content create deeper engagement. The loyalty formed is affective-cognitive: not just liking, but also understanding the reasons for support. This aligns with Dalton's (2000) loyalty approach.

4.4 Political Narrative and Framing

Findings:

1. Positive framing of political parties with anti-corruption and youth issues.

2. Criticism of money politics and long-standing political elites.

3. Consistent use of the narrative "that politics must be understandable to ordinary people."

Discussion:

The narrative constructed is bottom-up and contrasts sharply with the style of the political elite within the party. This strengthens political identification based on values, not just powerful figures. According to framing theory (Entman, 1993), influencers determine how audiences interpret political reality through specific emphases.

The analysis of framing strategies is based on interview results using four main framing indicators according to Entman (1993):

1. Problem Definition. How the issue is defined.

2. Causal Interpretation. Who or what is considered the cause of the problem.

3. Moral Evaluation. What values or norms are used to assess the problem.

4. Treatment Recommendation. The suggested solution or action.

The framing analysis was applied to two primary sources: @totalpolitikcom and @sewordofficial_.

Framing Strategy Analysis Based on Entman's Indicators (1993)

1. @totalpolitikcom Account (Edutainment Framing)

a. Problem Definition

@totalpolitikcom defines politics as an absurd, elitist, and often unreasonable world when viewed from the perspective of ordinary citizens. They highlight issues such as corruption, the luxury of officials, or policy inequalities as the core issues.

"We considered whether this issue should make us angry, laugh, or think."

b. Causal Interpretation

The cause of the problem was perceived as the political elite failing to carry out the people's mandate. They did not directly name any figures or parties, but implied that the political system and culture itself were dysfunctional.

c. Moral Evaluation

The values they uphold are transparency, accountability, and democracy. They believe the current system is too far removed from the people's reality. Their satire and humor serve as a way to demonstrate that the current situation is abnormal and needs to be acknowledged collectively.

d. Treatment Recommendation

The solutions they offer are educational and reflective. Through lighthearted yet sharply critical content, they encourage their audience to think critically and not simply remain passive about political realities.

Analysis of the @sewordofficial_ Account Framing Strategy Using Entman's (1993) Indicators

1. Problem Definition

@sewordofficial_ defines politics as an arena for narratives, stating that the public is vulnerable to disinformation and the politicization of religion or identity. The issues raised often relate to political opposition perceived as disruptive to stability, extreme populism, and attacks on the government that are not based on data.

"It's not about the criticism, but whether the data and intentions are honest or simply framing to create fear?"

2. Causal Interpretation

The opposition, buzzers spreading hoaxes, and political identity groups are often portrayed as the culprits behind public opinion chaos. They are accused of creating polarization and disrupting rational discussion. This framing suggests a clear and concrete enemy.

3. Moral Evaluation

The main values upheld by this account are national stability, sustainable development, rationality in politics, and anti-hoaxes. They frame the pro-government narrative not as absolute support, but as an effort to protect public reason from the onslaught of destructive information.

"If all issues are brought to bear on the narrative of an evil government, the public will lose their ability to think critically."

4. Treatment Recommendation

The solution proposed is the need for clarification, data-based education, and the massive framing of counter-narratives. They encourage a "counternarrative" to what they perceive as distortions of public opinion by opposing political groups.

"We fight hoaxes not only with clarification, but also with a strong and consistent narrative."

From the four indicators above, it is clear that:

@totalpolitikcom uses a framing strategy to arouse the public's emotional and moral awareness, with an implicit yet affectively powerful message.

@sewordofficial_ displays a firm framing pattern and counter-narrative framing. They define issues ideologically, blame specific groups for the cause, insert public morality as a rationale, and suggest solutions through more targeted public education. This differentiates them from @totalpolitikcom, which relies more on emotional framing and satire.

Both demonstrate that framing does not always have to be partisan; in fact, in the context of digital political influencers, framing can be a means of shaping citizens' mindsets in a more participatory manner.

4.5 Impact on Long-Term Electoral Loyalty

Results of interviews with followers:

1. 6 of 8 interviewees stated that they would follow the influencers' political recommendations for the next election, namely the 2029 General Election.

2. Several stated that they already "idolized" certain political parties because they were introduced to them through the content created by these influencers.

Discussion:

The following is an analysis of the long-term electoral impact of two political influencer accounts, @totalpolitikcom and @sewordofficial_, based on in-depth interviews with six followers of each account, three per account, which were analyzed narratively and thematically:

Akun	Nama Follower	Usia	Pekerjaan	Tingkat Pendidikan	Sikap Politik
@totalpolitikcom	RZ	25	Mahasiswa Hukum	S1	Kritis terhadap pemerintah
	AN	28	Desainer grafis	S1	Apolitis tapi skeptis
	GA	22	Freelance	S1	Cenderung

			jurnalis		oposisi
@sewordofficial_	DH	35	ASN	S2	Pro-pemerintah
	IL	30	Dosen	S2	Moderat, nasionalis
	MA	26	Karyawan swasta	S1	Simpatisan partai pemerintah

1. Changes in Political Consumption Patterns

Followers of both political influencer accounts stated that they read and share political content more frequently since following these accounts.

a. RZ (follower of @totalpolitikcom):

"At first, it was just for fun, but over time, I've come to understand who's making mistakes and who's just trying to create an image."

b. DH (follower of @sewordofficial_):

"I used to be indifferent, but now I always check for clarification or facts through this account. It's quite helpful in avoiding hoaxes."

Analysis:

Both accounts have successfully instilled long-term digital political engagement habits, albeit with different styles: one through satire, the other through serious clarification.

2. Effect on Loyalty to Values and Figures

Followers of @totalpolitikcom demonstrate loyalty to a critical stance toward all elites, while followers of @sewordofficial_ develop loyalty to the stability and policies of the current government.

a. AN (follower of totalpolitik.com):

"I'm not a fanatic about the opposition or the government. But I'm always suspicious when officials are too assertive."

b. IL (follower of @sewordofficial_):

"When the opposition attacks the government without data, I actually sympathize with the government even more."

Analysis:

@totalpolitik.com fosters loyalty to the values of resistance and skepticism, while @sewordofficial_ fosters loyalty to institutions and government stability. These two forms of loyalty both impact political choices, but in different orientations.

c. Actual and Prospective Electoral Behavior

Several followers stated that the accounts they follow influenced their voting style in the 2024 election, or at least shaped their preferences for future candidates.

a. GA (follower of @totalpolitikcom):

"I choose candidates who don't often show off their style. I monitor them through alternative media like this account first."

b. MA (follower of @sewordofficial_):

"From here, I can tell who's doing real work and who's just shouting. I take that with me to the polling station."

Analysis:

Political influencers have been shown to have a real influence on actual electoral behavior, particularly through consistent framing of information and simplification of complex issues.

c. Resilience to Hoaxes and Polarization

Followers of both accounts stated that they feel better equipped to filter information and debate biased political narratives, both from the mass media and other social media.

a. RZ (follower of @totalpolitikcom):

"Now I can distinguish between framing that's just for drama and one that's based on solid data."

b. DH (follower of @sewordofficial):

"If someone spreads a hoax, I usually check to see if Seword has responded. That's my guide."

Analysis:

Both accounts form a kind of gatekeeping cognitive effect in the minds of their followers or audience, acting as the primary filter for the truth and direction of the narrative. This demonstrates the growth of digital-political resilience, an indicator of modern electoral loyalty.

Six interviews found that political influencer accounts are able to shape long-term electoral loyalty through:

1. Increasing and consistent digital political consumption habits.

2. Internalization of certain political values (critical/skepticism vs. pro-stability).

3. Selection of figures based on content assessment, not just charisma.

4. Ability to filter narratives and avoid disinformation.

This reinforces key findings in framing and agenda-setting theory, while also showing that today's digital political loyalties are more based on trust in information and narrators, rather than simply ideology or party.

4.6 Additional Findings: Risk Patterns and Disinformation

Field Notes:

1. One piece of content was misunderstood by the audience and went viral with misinterpretations.

2. The influencer needed to clarify this during a live session so that their audience could watch the clarification and assess it directly.

Discussion:

This phenomenon demonstrates that loyalty can be distorted by unclear messages or biased framing. Therefore, digital literacy and ethical political communication are crucial aspects in building healthy and rational electoral loyalty.

V. CONCLUSION

This research shows that political influencers and digital campaigners play an increasingly significant role in shaping voter engagement and loyalty, particularly among first-time voters. Through educational, communicative, and personalized content, they successfully convey political narratives in a more engaging and relevant way, surpassing the formal communication styles of political parties or candidates participating in political contests/elections.

This casual and interactive communication style creates an emotional connection (parasocial interaction) between influencers and their audiences, which then influences political perceptions and preferences. Consistently and credibly developed content can foster public trust, which is the foundation for long-term electoral loyalty.

However, this loyalty is still considered weak in the face of the evolving political dynamics and digital information in Indonesia as the election season begins. This means that digital loyalty is not something that is always present or permanent, but must be nurtured through intense communication, clarity of message, and the moral integrity of the influencers themselves.

Thus, the role of political influencers is not merely a promotional tool to increase candidate electoral appeal, but has shifted to become a key actor in the process of shaping long-term political awareness among audiences/followers based on values and identification.

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