

## Comparison of Social Media Use in Its Influence on Voter Behavior in Indonesia and the Philippines

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### Abstract

This study examines the influence of social media on voter behavior in Indonesia and the Philippines, focusing on the dominance of TikTok in Indonesia and Facebook in the Philippines. The objective of this research is to compare how these platforms shape political perceptions and electoral choices in different socio-political contexts. Using a comparative qualitative approach, this study applies David Easton's Political System framework to analyze social media as political inputs processed through algorithms and influencer networks. Data were collected through literature review and analysis of relevant cases, including electoral dynamics in both countries. The findings reveal that TikTok significantly influences first-time voters in Indonesia through visual, emotional, and viral content, creating a relatively homogeneous information environment via the For You Page algorithm. In contrast, Facebook in the Philippines functions as a more structured political arena, supported by organized influencer networks and coordinated disinformation, which played a crucial role in shaping political narratives and electoral mobilization, particularly in the 2022 presidential election. In conclusion, while both countries demonstrate increased digital political participation, they also face rising polarization and misinformation. The study underscores the importance of strengthening digital literacy, enhancing algorithmic transparency, and improving regulations on online political campaigns to safeguard democratic integrity.

Keywords : Social media; Voter behavior; Political communication; Disinformation; Digital democracy

### Abstrak

*Studi ini mengkaji pengaruh media sosial terhadap perilaku pemilih di Indonesia dan Filipina, dengan fokus pada dominasi TikTok di Indonesia dan Facebook di Filipina. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk membandingkan bagaimana platform ini membentuk persepsi politik dan pilihan elektoral dalam konteks sosial-*

**Article History:** Received 08 Dec 2025, Revised Mar 2026,  
Accepted 01 Apr 2026, Available online 01 June 2026

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*politik yang berbeda. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif komparatif, penelitian ini menerapkan kerangka kerja Sistem Politik David Easton untuk menganalisis media sosial sebagai masukan politik yang diproses melalui algoritma dan jaringan influencer. Data dikumpulkan melalui tinjauan literatur dan analisis kasus-kasus yang relevan, termasuk dinamika elektoral di kedua negara. Temuan ini mengungkapkan bahwa TikTok secara signifikan memengaruhi pemilih pertama kali di Indonesia melalui konten visual, emosional, dan viral, menciptakan lingkungan informasi yang relatif homogen melalui algoritma For You Page. Sebaliknya, Facebook di Filipina berfungsi sebagai arena politik yang lebih terstruktur, didukung oleh jaringan influencer yang terorganisir dan disinformasi terkoordinasi, yang memainkan peran penting dalam membentuk narasi politik dan mobilisasi elektoral, khususnya dalam pemilihan presiden 2022. Kesimpulannya, sementara kedua negara menunjukkan peningkatan partisipasi politik digital, mereka juga menghadapi meningkatnya polarisasi dan informasi yang salah. Studi ini menggarisbawahi pentingnya memperkuat literasi digital, meningkatkan transparansi algoritmik, dan meningkatkan regulasi pada kampanye politik online untuk menjaga integritas demokrasi.*

*Kata kunci : Media sosial; Perilaku pemilih; Komunikasi politik; Disinformasi; Demokrasi digital*

## **A. Introduction**

In the era of digital democracy, social media has become a central arena for public opinion formation and political mobilization. In Southeast Asia, Indonesia and the Philippines stand out as countries with a very large number of social media users in early 2024 recorded Indonesia has around 139 million social media users, while the Philippines has ~86.7 million users. This makes both countries an important market for digital political communication.<sup>1</sup>

Although both democracies have high internet penetration, the patterns of dominant platforms in the digital political space differ significantly between the two countries. In Indonesia, survey data indicate that video-based and messaging platforms dominate digital consumption. According to recent reports by We Are Social and DataReportal, YouTube reaches more than 90% of internet users, followed by WhatsApp (around 88–90%), TikTok (approximately 65–70%), and X (Twitter) (around 55–60%). TikTok usage in Indonesia is largely concentrated in entertainment (around 60–70%), followed by social interaction and lifestyle content, while political content occupies a smaller but rapidly growing share, especially during election periods. This configuration

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<sup>1</sup> Simon Kemp, "Digital 2024: Indonesia," datareportal.com, 2024, [https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2024-indonesia?utm\\_source](https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2024-indonesia?utm_source).

makes TikTok and X particularly effective channels for short political campaigns, viral messaging, and emotional issue framing, especially among younger voters.<sup>2</sup>

In contrast, in the Philippines, Facebook (including Messenger) remains the most dominant platform, with user penetration exceeding 90% of internet users—one of the highest globally. Studies show that Facebook in the Philippines is used not only for social networking but also for news consumption (around 70–80%), political engagement, and community mobilization. This exceptionally high penetration makes it a powerful tool for spreading political narratives, fostering organized influencer ecosystems, and, at the same time, creating vulnerabilities to coordinated disinformation campaigns.<sup>3</sup>

This divergence in platform dominance raises an important puzzle: why do certain platforms (TikTok and X in Indonesia; Facebook and X in the Philippines) become more effective in influencing voter behavior despite both countries experiencing rapid digitalization of politics? To address this question, this study employs a comparative political approach combined with David Easton's Political System Theory. The selection of this framework is grounded in its analytical strength in explaining how external societal forces are transformed into political outcomes through a systemic process. Unlike alternative approaches—such as media effects theory, which focuses primarily on individual-level persuasion, or institutionalism, which emphasizes formal political structures—Easton's framework enables a more integrative analysis by linking inputs (social media content, algorithms, and influencer networks), conversion mechanisms (platform ecosystems, institutional settings, and political economy), and outputs (voter behavior, political legitimacy, and electoral outcomes).

By using this framework, the study captures how digital platforms function not merely as communication tools but as part of a broader political system that processes information, shapes perceptions, and influences decision-making. This is particularly relevant for first-time voters, who are highly active in digital environments and more susceptible to algorithmically curated information flows.

This phenomenon of differences in platform dominance raises a major puzzle as to *why certain platforms (TikTok & X in Indonesia; Facebook & X in the Philippines) to be more effective in influencing voter behavior in each country, even though both are undergoing massive political digitalization?* To explain this puzzle, this study uses a comparative political study approach and a political systems theory framework David

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<sup>2</sup> wearesocial.com, "Digital 2026: Top Digital and Social Media Trends in Indonesia," wearesocial.com, 2025, <https://wearesocial.com/id/blog/2025/11/digital-2026-top-digital-and-social-media-trends-in-indonesia/>.

<sup>3</sup> Napoleon.cat, "Facebook Users in Philippines," napoleon.cat, 2024, <https://stats.napoleoncat.com/facebook-users-in-philippines/2024/07/>.

Easton sees social media as one of the societal inputs that, through institutional and social conversion mechanisms, influences political output (policy, legitimacy, and voter behavior). With this framework, we can examine how institutional structures, economic-political configurations, and platform ecosystem characteristics shape the path of social media influence on voter decisions, especially for first-time voters who are very active in the digital realm.

This study aims to compare how the types and patterns of social media use as well as the mechanisms of virality, influencers, and message dissemination (including disinformation) affect voter behavior in Indonesia and the Philippines. The data used as references include the results of national and thematic public opinion surveys (OPI/Persepi/LSI and associations of survey institutions in Indonesia; Pulse Asia, Social Weather Stations, and other national surveys in the Philippines), reports on platform usage (DataReportal / We Are Social / NapoleonCat), as well as academic and analytical literature examining the role of TikTok, Facebook, and X in electoral campaigns and disinformation. Recent case studies show TikTok's central role in changing campaign formats in the SE-Asia region and also underscore the intense pattern of disinformation in the Philippines that often uses Facebook networks and 'click armies'.<sup>4</sup>

The significance of this study lies in (1) the empirical contribution of cross-country comparisons regarding the platform-specific influence of social media on voter behavior; (2) theoretical sharpening of how digital inputs are converted into political behavior in different institutional contexts (Easton's framework); and (3) policy implications for political digital literacy, regulation of online campaigns, and improvement of public opinion survey methodologies in the era of viral content.

The rapid development of digital communication technology has significantly changed the political dynamics in Southeast Asia, particularly in Indonesia and the Philippines. Social media is no longer just a means of communication, but has evolved into a primary arena where political discourse, voter preferences, and campaign strategies are shaped and at stake. In both countries, which are both large electoral democracies with a dominance of young voters, social media plays an important role in mediating the relationship between political actors and society.

However, the interaction between social media and political dynamics cannot be understood without considering the structural differences in each country's political system. Kristiyanto, in his research *"Institutionalization and Party Resilience in Indonesian Electoral Democracy,"* emphasized that political parties in Indonesia are still in the process of institutional consolidation and often operate in a pragmatic electoral environment. This condition opens up space for social media to function as an

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<sup>4</sup> Kemp, "Digital 2024: Indonesia."

alternative channel in building political image and mobilizing support, especially at the candidate level.<sup>5</sup> On the contrary, Aspinall and Hicken, in their study of clientelism, point out that the Philippines relies heavily on entrenched local political machinery as well as patronage networks. This shows that social media in the Philippines does not replace traditional political structures, but rather complements and strengthens existing clientelist networks.<sup>6</sup>

The role of social media becomes increasingly clear when looking at the political behavior of young voters. Batara, in "*Factors Affecting Youth Voting Preferences in the Philippine Senatorial Election: A Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) Analysis*," found that young voters in the Philippines tend to rely more on surveys and party identification than on the candidate's personal appeal.<sup>7</sup> The findings suggest a shift in the way young voters process political information, much of which is circulated through digital platforms such as Facebook. Meanwhile, the study "*Complacent Democrats: The Political Preferences of Gen Z Indonesians*" shows that Gen Z voters in Indonesia have a high level of satisfaction with democracy, despite indications of declining quality of democracy. This phenomenon indicates that exposure to political content on platforms like TikTok does not necessarily encourage critical engagement, but can instead reinforce passive attitudes or "pseudo-complacency" towards political conditions.<sup>8</sup>

Furthermore, experimental research by Fossati in Southeast Asia shows that voter preferences are influenced by factors such as a candidate's performance, class background, and party affiliation—which are increasingly communicated and reframed through social media campaigns.<sup>9</sup> In Indonesia, Nugroho explained that the open list proportional system encourages competition between candidates more intensely, so politicians are encouraged to use digital platforms such as TikTok for more personalized and direct campaigns to voters.<sup>10</sup> Meanwhile, Mendoza highlighted the strong influence of political dynasties in the Philippines, which suggests that social media operates in—

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<sup>5</sup> Hasto Kristiyanto, Satya Arinanto, and Hanief Saha Ghafur, "Institutionalization and Party Resilience in Indonesian Electoral Democracy," *Helikon* 9, no. 12 (2023): e22919, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.helikon.2023.e22919>.

<sup>6</sup> Edward Aspinall and Allen Hicken, "Guns for Hire and Enduring Machines: Clientelism beyond Parties in Indonesia and the Philippines," *Democratization* 27, no. 1 (2020): 137–56, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2019.1590816>.

<sup>7</sup> Enrique Batara, Ace Kristoffer Labadan, and Marozel Roa, "Factors Affecting Youth Voting Preferences in the Philippine Senatorial Election: A Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) Analysis," *Jurnal Studi Pemerintahan* 12, no. 3 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.18196/jgp.123137>.

<sup>8</sup> Burhanuddin Muhtadi, Eve Alicia Warburton, and Liam Gammon, "Complacent Democrats: The Political Preferences of Gen Z Indonesians," *Journal of East Asian Studies*, 2025, 1–28, <https://doi.org/10.1017/jea.2025.10011>.

<sup>9</sup> Diego Fossati, "What Drives Voting Behavior in Southeast Asia? Evidence from Candidate Choice Experiments in Five Countries," *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1177/18681034251334253>.

<sup>10</sup> Chandra Dwi Harto Nugroho, "A Comparative Analysis of Electoral Systems in Indonesia and the Philippines: Structure, Process, and Political Representation," *Jurnal Inovasi Ilmu Sosial Dan Politik (JISoP)* 7, no. 1 (2025): 80–94, <https://doi.org/10.33474/jisop.v7i1.23422>.

and often reinforces—established socio-political structures, rather than fundamentally altering them.<sup>11</sup>

Overall, the studies show that social media does not work in isolation, but rather interacts dynamically with institutional structures, electoral systems, and socio-political contexts. In Indonesia, social media tends to encourage political competition that is individual and candidate-centric, while in the Philippines, social media serves more of a function of strengthening the network of patronage and elite domination. In addition, platform-specific dynamics also help shape these interactions: Facebook remains the main source of political information in the Philippines, while TikTok is growing as an important political space for young voters in Indonesia, especially through short, algorithm-based content.

Although the literature on electoral politics in both countries continues to grow, there is still a gap in comparative research that explicitly examines how different social media platforms interact with political structures to influence voter behavior. Most of the existing research still focuses on institutional or structural factors, with limited attention to how the digital ecosystem reshapes political engagement, particularly among novice voters. In addition, there is still a lack of research that integrates theoretical frameworks such as Easton's systems theory, which views political processes as an interaction between inputs, conversion processes, and outputs. The application of this framework allows for a more comprehensive analysis of how political information circulating on social media (input) is processed in the political system (conversion), and ultimately reflected in election results (output).

### **Theoretical Framework**

This research relies on the perspective of the political system as a theoretical umbrella to understand how economic conditions affect the quality of novice voters in elections. In the view of David Easton (1965), the political system is understood as a mechanism that receives input in the form of *demands* and support from the community, then processes it through political institutions to produce outputs in the form of policies or political decisions<sup>12,13</sup>. This process takes place dynamically with feedback from the community that will again form a new cycle. Thus, the political system does not stand alone, but is always influenced by

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<sup>11</sup> Ronald U Mendoza et al., "Arch ī Um Ateneo Ateneo School of Government Publications Political Dynasties , Business , and Poverty in the Philippines Political Dynasties , Business , and Poverty in the Philippines," 2022.

<sup>12</sup> David Easton, "An Approach to the Analysis of Political Systems," *World Politics* 9, no. 3 (1957): 383–400, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2008920>.

<sup>13</sup> Easton.

The development of social media is also an important variable that shapes the political behavior of novice voters. Social media now serves as a new input channel in the political system, where public demands and support are expressed quickly, massively, and sometimes unfiltered. On the other hand, the high intensity of social media use by the younger generation encourages presidential candidates to shift their campaign strategies to digital platforms. This is done to form an image, expand the reach of political messages, and utilize algorithms that are able to direct information personally to novice voters. Thus, social media not only influences voters' preferences, but also changes the way candidates interact with the political system and organize their communication strategies.<sup>1415</sup>

Within this theoretical framework, it adds the role of social media as a new arena where novice voters absorb, process, and express their political preferences. Social media is not only a channel of political communication, but also serves as an instant *feedback mechanism* in the Easton political system. In the context of the economy, social media strengthens young voters' perception of the candidate's welfare issues, cost of living, and economic policies.

#### David Easton's Theory of the Democratic System

David Easton views politics as an open system that always interacts with its environment. The political system receives input in the form of *demands* and support from the community, then processed by political institutions to produce outputs in the form of policies or political decisions. This process does not stop at the output, but forms a cycle with feedback that will return to become new inputs.<sup>16</sup>

In the context of novice voters, economic conditions are a form of significant demands. For example, the high cost of education, the difficulty of accessing jobs, and the high price of basic necessities affect the way the younger generation assesses presidential candidates. These aspirations are channeled through political participation, especially elections. The policy outcomes of the elected candidate (e.g. scholarship programs or affordable education fees, employment, or subsidies) are then reassessed outputs by young voters, influencing their attitudes in the next election.

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<sup>14</sup> Ahmad Bukhari et al., "TikTok Sebagai Media Literasi Politik Pemilih Pemula," *Pendas: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Dasar* 10 (2025), <https://journal.unpas.ac.id/index.php/pendas/article/view/37909/20321>.

<sup>15</sup> Reivania Calista Rizanul et al., "Analisis Peran Media Sosial (TikTok) Dalam Dinamika Partisipasi Politik Pada Pemilu Presiden 2024," *Journal of Social Contemplativa* 3, no. 1 (2025): 51–61, <https://doi.org/10.61183/jsc.v3i1.91>.

<sup>16</sup> David Easton, "507692-The Political System (1953).Pdf," 1965.

Social media reinforces this dynamic by serving as an input-output communication channel. Young voters not only convey their demands through the ballot box, but also through digital media that are able to pressure political elites to be responsive to economic issues. Thus, social media serves as a "feedback space" that accelerates the cycle of Easton's political system.

### **Method**

This research employs a qualitative approach using a dual-case study design that compares Indonesia (with a focus on TikTok) and the Philippines (with a focus on Facebook). The purpose of this design is to examine how different social media platforms, with their distinctive features and user cultures, shape political behavior and voter engagement in each country. This research relies entirely on secondary data collected through a systematic literature review. Data sources include academic articles, policy reports, and survey findings from credible institutions such as DataReportal, We Are Social, LSI, and Pulse Asia.

These sources were selected based on their relevance to social media use, political campaigns, and voter behavior in both countries. To ensure methodological clarity, the data analysis was conducted in three structured phases. First, a digital content analysis was conducted on previously recorded campaign materials such as videos, posts, and reported user interactions to identify key political narratives and the communication strategies employed on each platform. Second, a thematic analysis was applied to group recurring patterns, with an emphasis on how social media content influences political engagement and voter choices.

Third, to systematically analyze the findings from Indonesia and the Philippines, a comparative analysis of the cases was conducted, emphasizing the similarities and differences in the platforms' impacts as well as the broader sociopolitical contexts in which they operate. This study ensures a clear, structured, and rigorous interpretation of the data in the analysis by following detailed analytical steps, namely content identification, thematic grouping, and cross case comparison. Ultimately, this method allows for a deep understanding of how voter behaviour is influenced by social media platforms in various political contexts.

### **A. Dominant Platforms and Usage Patterns**

## 1. Indonesia and TikTok's Dominance as a Dominant Platform

In the Indonesian context, TikTok is an important platform for Generation Z and novice voters due to the combination of powerful algorithmic mechanisms and fast-paced and visual-based digital communication preferences. According to a study titled “Ambivalensi Politik Digital: Algoritma, Gamifikasi, dan Polarisasi Generasi Z di TikTok” mendapatkan sebuah temuan bahwa TikTok creating a homogeneous space of information through *For You Pages* (FYPs), where algorithms work as input channels that filter political content based on user interactions, thereby narrowing down the variety of political information received<sup>17</sup>.

The political aspect of Easton's view can be seen when political content that enters through the FYP is perceived as a valid reference by first-time voters, which then influences their digital discussions, political expression, and emotional engagement. In addition, politainment phenomena such as *live battles*, political memes, and partisan hashtags reinforce the affective rather than deliberative aspects, so that the political decisions of novice voters are more shaped by visual appeal and viral trends than by rational evaluations of candidates.

According to David Easton's view of political systems, TikTok's FYP algorithm acts as a gatekeeping device in the political input transformation process. This algorithm carefully gathers public demands and support prior to their entry into the political system's “black box”.<sup>18</sup> In early 2024, Indonesia has 126.8 million adult users, indicating that this algorithmic gatekeeping has extensive and notable influence.<sup>19</sup> indicating that this algorithmic gatekeeping has extensive and notable influence. Consequently, various political requests are condensed and streamlined into uniform emotional stories, forming an echo chamber that strengthens polarization influenced by online inclinations.

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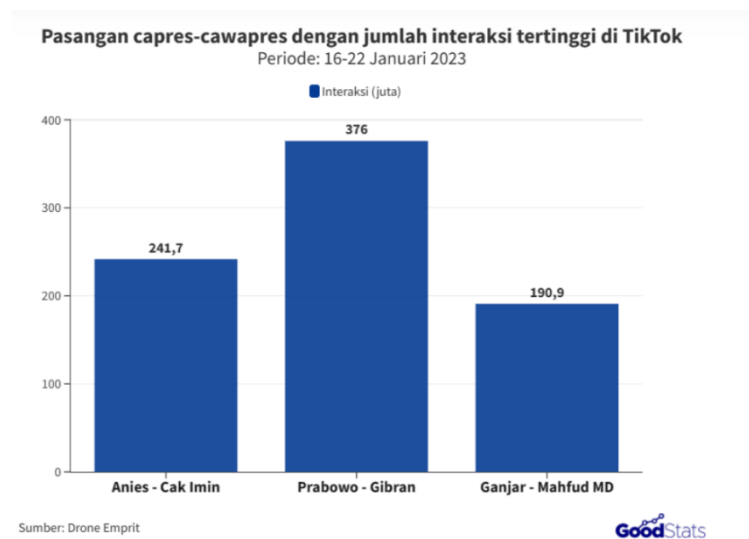
<sup>17</sup> Muhammad Guntur Purboyo et al., “Ambivalensi Politik Digital : Algoritma , Gamifikasi , Dan Polarisasi Generasi Z Di TikTok” 11, no. 2 (2025): 172–90.

<sup>18</sup> Topic-wise Journalism and Mass Communication Notes, “Understanding the Systems Model of Public Policy UnderstandingtheSys ModelofPublicPolic,” 2025, 1–9.

<sup>19</sup> Kemp, “Digital 2024: Indonesia.”

This can be exemplified in the previous presidential debate, Prabowo received many attacks and criticism from other candidates. Although it seems that he is not in touch with the other two presidential candidates, this condition is actually used to gain the sympathy of the younger generation through TikTok. Prabowo is perceived as a 'victim' and a party that constantly receives attacks from the other two presidential candidates<sup>20</sup>.

The results of this process can be seen in the strengthening of polarization and the increasing tendency of Gen Z to make TikTok the main source of referrals, not just entertainment. This was also revealed by the Prabowo-Gibran TKN Communication Team, Herzaky Mahendra, TikTok is effective in rallying public opinion "TikTok users) give responses, give responses, and it plays more sympathy, empathy. What they (the public) feel," quoted from detik.com<sup>21</sup>.



Source: <https://goodstats.id/article/drone-emprit-prabowo-gibran-jadi-paslon-yang-merajai-jumlah-interaksi-di-tiktok-s8nsu>

<sup>20</sup> Edi Wahyono, "Taktik Kampanye Pilpres Di TikTok TikTok Menjadi Palagan Para Kandidat Pilpres 2024 Untuk Berebut Pemilih Muda. Gimik Dimainkan Dan Citra Dipoles Demi Merebut Atensi," detik.com, 2024, <https://news.detik.com/x/detail/spotlight/20240115/Taktik-Kampanye-Pilpres-di-TikTok/>.

<sup>21</sup> Wahyono.

Data analysis of digital interactions from GoodStats.id<sup>22</sup> for the period January 16-22, 2023 reveals the hierarchy of dominance of candidate pairs in the TikTok ecosystem. The Prabowo-Gibran pair dominated with 241.7 million interactions, followed by Ganjar-Mahfud MD (190.9 million), and Anies-Cak Imin (376 thousand). The disparity of 126 times between the top and bottom pairs shows the asymmetry of digital platform capitalization in political campaigns. These findings confirm the hypothesis that TikTok functions as a political conversion arena where algorithms and visual-emotional content are the main determinants in shaping public attention, especially among young voters who are the platform's main demographic. This dominance in interactions also reflects the effectiveness of politainment strategies in building massive engagement in the digital space.

TikTok's dominance in Indonesia not only reflects its popularity as a platform, but also shows its role as an important arena where political meanings are constructed and fought. In addition, TikTok is also strengthened by its algorithmic system where its communication style can be combined with short-form videos, allowing certain types of content—such as storytelling, humor, and narratives involving influencers—to shape the way novice voters interpret political messages.<sup>23</sup> This form of content not only conveys information, but actively frames the candidate's image, builds emotional engagement, and simplifies complex political issues into an easy-to-understand narrative.

At the same time, TikTok serves as a space for political interaction and public opinion formation, where candidates, influencers, and users compete with each other in building favorable perceptions through viral content and

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<sup>22</sup> GoodStats.id (2024) <https://goodstats.id/article/drone-emprit-prabowo-gibran-jadi-paslon-yang-merajai-jumlah-interaksi-di-tiktok-s8nsu>.

<sup>23</sup> Ahmad Bukhari et al., "TikTok Sebagai Media Literasi Politik Pemilih Pemula," *Pendas: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Dasar* 10 (2025), <https://journal.unpas.ac.id/index.php/pendas/article/view/37909/20321>.

planned messaging strategies.<sup>24</sup> Through algorithmic amplification, certain narratives gain higher visibility and legitimacy, thus influencing the way voters rate a presidential candidate's credibility, closeness, and leadership qualities.

In this context, TikTok serves not only as an input channel and conversion arena in Easton's model, but also as a dynamic space for perception formation, where political preferences are shaped through repeated exposure, interaction, and reinterpretation of content. This process ultimately results in feedback that reinforces certain political narratives as well as voter orientation in the digital political cycle.

## 2. The Philippines and Facebook's Dominance in Influencing Elections

Facebook's massive influence was a decisive factor in Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr.'s victory in the 2022 Philippine presidential election, a phenomenon that can be understood through the Input stage within the framework of David Easton's political system. The public's high dependence on digital platforms as a primary source of political information creates vulnerabilities that are exploited by the Marcos camp<sup>25</sup>.

Marcos' vast network of digital influencers strategically acted as 'political brokers' by channeling certain demands and support from the social milieu into the political system. They create and amplify public demands by instilling authoritarian nostalgic narratives and promises of prosperity, while building strong support for Marcos, effectively mobilizing the voter base in the digital space<sup>26</sup>.

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<sup>24</sup> Reivania Calista Rizanul et al., "Analisis Peran Media Sosial (TikTok) Dalam Dinamika Partisipasi Politik Pada Pemilu Presiden 2024," *Journal of Social Contemplativa* 3, no. 1 (2025): 51–61, <https://doi.org/10.61183/jsc.v3i1.91>.

<sup>25</sup> Aries A Arugay, "Stronger Social Media Influence in the 2022 Philippine Elections," *Yusok Ishak Institute*, No. 33 (2022): 2022, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/620176091924911>.

<sup>26</sup> Fatima Gaw and Aries A Arugay, "Like, Subscribe and Vote: The Role of Political Influencers in the 2022 Philippine Elections and Beyond," *ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute*, no. 19 (2024): 1–9.

<b>Social Media</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
YouTube	97.2
Facebook	96.8
Facebook Messenger	92.1
Instagram	73.4
Twitter	62.7
Tiktok	48.8
Pinterest	39.1
Viber	36.9

Source: <https://www.iseas.edu.sg/articles-commentaries/iseas-perspective/2022-33-stronger-social-media-influence-in-the-2022-philippine-elections-by-aries-a-arugay/>

These already polarized demands and support then enter the stage of the political system conversion process, where digital campaigns operate as a crucial processing mechanism. In this context, Facebook is not just a medium, but the core of the conversion tool itself.

The influencer network serves as a *gatekeeper* and propaganda tool, selectively filtering and amplifying messages in support of Marcos while aggressively waging a campaign of disinformation and fake news to undermine political opponents<sup>27</sup>. This process effectively transforms public sentiment into a directed political preference, ensuring that inputs are channeled in such a way as to produce the desired Output: Bongbong Marcos Jr's electoral victory.

Marcos Jr.'s electoral victory became an authoritative output generated by a political system that has been digitally influenced. This output, in turn, provides very important Feedback into the system. The success achieved through Facebook-based strategies in 2022 provides confirmation that

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<sup>27</sup> Gaw and Arugay.

influencer campaign models, disinformation, and digital polarization are effective ways to seize power in the Philippines<sup>28</sup>.

## **B. The Influence of Social Media on Elections**

Social media has changed the landscape in voter behavior in both Indonesia and the Philippines in complex and often paradoxical ways. The findings from the case study of the Indonesian Election in 2024 reveal that behind its inability to expand democratic participation, social media also has a negative impact, namely echo chambers and misinformation. This outcome corresponds with Easton's model, in which digital platforms function as input structures that filter, prioritize, and transform political demands before they enter the political system. This pattern is consistent with Easton's framework by looking at social media as an input that influences the political system, but it also applies to the Philippines and a variety of different platform mechanisms.

In Indonesia, found that social media is an effective political mobilization tool, especially for young voters and marginalized groups. Partisipisan reports an increase in political involvement due to the ability of platforms like Tiktok to facilitate direct discussions with political figures. According to research by Miarta (2024), platforms like TikTok, which enable direct interaction with political people and topics, are responsible for a rise in political activity.<sup>29</sup> This is in line with the trend of TikTok's dominance among Indonesian Gen Z, who prefer political content that is visual, interactive, and easy to understand. Analytically, this shows that TikTok strengthens the input phase by reducing barriers to political expression, while at the same time changing the conversion process through the algorithmic reinforcement of emotion driven content over policy-related information. As a result, participation has increased, but mainly in an expressive rather than deliberative form.

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<sup>28</sup> Gaw and Arugay.

<sup>29</sup> Wahyu Mahesa Miarta, "Voter Behavior and Social Media Influence: A Case Study of Indonesia's 2024 General Election," *Https://Jurnal.Usk.Ac.Id/Riwayat*, 2024, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/387299920\\_Voter\\_Behavior\\_and\\_Social\\_Media\\_Influence\\_A\\_Case\\_Study\\_of\\_Indonesia's\\_2024\\_General\\_Election](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/387299920_Voter_Behavior_and_Social_Media_Influence_A_Case_Study_of_Indonesia's_2024_General_Election).

This pattern encourages the emergence of more intense political engagement, as users feel they have a direct and relevant channel of expression to their digital lives. However, the increase in participation is inseparable from the structural consequences generated by the platform's algorithm. TikTok, like many other platforms, tends to create echo chambers, where a recommendation system gradually reduces the type of information shown to users based on how they interacted before. In Eastonian terms, this represents a distortion within the conversion stage, where political inputs are selectively processed in ways that reduce deliberative capacity and intensify ideological clustering. As a result, young voters are exposed to more light politics with political content that supports their initial preferences; This reduces opportunities for cross-view conversations and increases distance between groups that have different political leanings. Such conditions not only hinder effective public discussion, but can also make a difference among new voters.<sup>30</sup>

Meanwhile, in the Philippines, Facebook is becoming the epicenter of a similar influence, albeit in a more organized and partisan way. The network of political influencers who support Bongbong Marcos Jr. act as political brokers acting actively and participatively who not only strengthen support, but also actively spread narratives that undermine the credibility of opponents. This pattern shows how input from social media, in the form of public demands and support, is converted into directed political preferences. The result, as seen in Marcos Jr.'s victory, was an electoral output heavily influenced by organized disinformation and digital mobilization.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Abisono, Fajar Q., Sri Hastjarjo, and Vina A. Destyani, "Digital Literacy Landscape of Novice Voters in the 2024 Election in Indonesia," *Informasi* 54, no. 2 (2024): 115-124, <https://doi.org/10.21831/informasi.v54i2.71246>.

<sup>31</sup> Ong, J. C., and R. Tapsell, "Mitigating Disinformation in Southeast Asian Elections: Lessons from Indonesia, Philippines and Thailand," NATO StratCom Centre of Excellence, 2020, [www.stratcomcoe.org/mitigating-disinformation-southeast-asian-elections](http://www.stratcomcoe.org/mitigating-disinformation-southeast-asian-elections).

According to an analysis conducted on the presidential candidate's Facebook content during the 2022 election,<sup>32</sup> Facebook serves as the main channel for delivering targeted and strategic political messages. The content analysis of Marcos Jr.'s Facebook communication during the 2022 election demonstrates the platform's role as a centralized conversion mechanism in Easton's architecture. Economic fears were reframed as nostalgic promises through intentional agenda-setting, while algorithmic curation resulted in fragmented media environments that supported first-time voter preferences. These digitally mediated conversion processes, aided by interactive elements that created an apparent participative intimacy, turned public mood into directed political preferences, illustrating how platform architecture influences electoral outcomes through systematic input processing.

Misinformation has evolved into a systematic issue that severely compromises electoral integrity in Indonesia and the Philippines. According to empirical evidence, 68% of young voters in Indonesia are exposed to political hoaxes every week,<sup>33</sup> and in the Philippines, organized disinformation networks produce 72% of viral political content.<sup>34</sup> This technologically improved disinformation system creates a contradictory situation in which platforms like TikTok and Facebook increase participatory access while normalizing incorrect information streams. This occurrence can be investigated using political systems theory, which views misinformation as tainted input that, when influenced by digital transformation processes, creates electoral outcomes that differ from informed democratic discourse. As a result, the systematic management of polluted information lowers public confidence and reduces the quality of democratic decisions.

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<sup>32</sup> Palcullo, V. E. V., & Sriborisutsakul, S. (2023)

<sup>33</sup> Databoks.katadata.co.id. (2023, November 14). *KIC survey: Most Indonesian youths frequently exposed to political news: Pusat Data Ekonomi Dan bisnis Indonesia: Databoks*. Pusat Data Ekonomi dan Bisnis Indonesia. <https://databoks.katadata.co.id/en/political/statistics/8e24f420e2a071d/kic-survey-most-indonesian-youths-frequently-exposed-to-political-news>

<sup>34</sup> Braden Hale Bagley, "Patient Zero," *Sport and the Pandemic*, 2020, 264–69, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003105916-34>.

This dynamic makes voter manipulation more likely, especially for new voters with low computer literacy. Persuasive and frequently deceptive material is accepted without question due to limitations in the critical evaluation of political information. Digital public spaces have the potential to change from sites of conversation into areas of uneven influence if substantial efforts are not made to enhance digital literacy. This could ultimately lower the standard of democratic participation in both countries. This is a situation that highlights a major problem with the political system's feedback loop: biased inputs cause biased outcomes, leading to a vicious cycle that gradually weakens democracy resistance.

### 3. General Comparison

The two countries show similar patterns in the influence of social media on voter behavior, namely widespread political participation but accompanied by increased polarization and vulnerability to disinformation. However, the context of the dominant platform, its influence mechanisms and characteristics shows significant differences between Indonesia and the Philippines.

The comparative analysis reveals that while both Indonesia and the Philippines exhibit similar macro-level patterns, where social media amplifies political participation while simultaneously exacerbating polarization and disinformation the underlying mechanisms, platform dynamics, and socio-political contexts differ significantly. These variations can be systematically understood through the lens of David Easton's political system framework, which highlights how digital inputs are differentially processed within each nation's political ecosystem.<sup>35</sup>

In Indonesia, the algorithmic autonomy of TikTok's For You Page leads to a conversion process in which platform design takes precedence over traditional political intermediaries. The FYP algorithm acts as an automated gatekeeper, aggregating political inputs through engagement-based curation rather than

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<sup>35</sup> Gaw, F., & Arugay, A. A. (2024). Like, Subscribe and Vote: The Role of Political Influencers in the 2022 Philippine Elections and Beyond. *ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute*, No. 19, 1–9.

ideological mediation. This results in generationally segmented outcomes, with first-time voters developing preferences through emotional virality rather than deliberative evaluation.<sup>36</sup> The system's feedback loop fosters platform-dependent politization, as seen in the institutionalization of TikTok-centric campaign methods after 2024.

Conversely, the Philippine case demonstrates digitally-augmented traditional politics, where Facebook's networked architecture extends existing clientelist structures. Conversion occurs through human-mediated gatekeeping via influencer networks that replicate traditional political brokerage roles. This creates structured digital clientelism systematic, resource-intensive, and strategically coordinated, that transforms inputs into partisan outputs while marginalizing opposition narratives through organized disinformation campaigns.

The Indonesian model implies that algorithmic personalization fragments political intermediary functions, potentially undermining collective decision. The Philippine model suggests that elite authority is digitally reinforced through networked mobilization, potentially entrenching existing power systems.<sup>37</sup> Both express concerns about technologically induced democratic deterioration, but via distinct ways.

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<sup>36</sup> Purboyo, M. G., Amriwan, A., Tivantara, B. J., & Putra, H. D. (2025). Ambivalensi Politik Digital: Algoritma, Gamifikasi, dan Polarisasi Generasi Z di TikTok. *Jurnal Ilmu Sosial dan Ilmu Politik*, 11(2), 172–190.

<sup>37</sup> Nugroho, C. D. H. (2025). A Comparative Analysis of Electoral Systems in Indonesia and the Philippines: Structure, Process, and Political Representation. *Jurnal Inovasi Ilmu Sosial dan Politik*, 7(1), 80–94. <https://doi.org/10.33474/jisop.v7i1.23422>

**Comparison Table of the Influence of Social Media on Voter Behavior:  
Indonesia and Philippines**

<b>Comparative Aspects</b>	<b>Indonesia</b>	<b>Philippines</b>
<b>Platform Dominan</b>	TikTok	Facebook
<b>Influence Characteristics</b>	Emotional, Generational (Gen Z), Virality-Based	Partisan, Structured, Influencer Network-Based
<b>Disinformation Mechanisms</b>	Potential manipulation of the context of a short video; More hoaxes on Facebook	Systematic disinformation, Troll Farms/Clicky Armies, Organized hit campaigns
<b>Target Voter Profile</b>	Beginner and Younger Generation Voters	Diverse Age Groups, General Society
<b>Impact on Participation</b>	Expanding the participation of young voters who were previously apathetic	Mobilizing mass support through a comprehensive narrative
<b>Impact on Polarization</b>	Generation-based polarization and emotional affection	Deep partisan and ideological polarization
<b>Context in the Easton Framework</b>	<p><i>Input:</i> Viral &amp; emotional content</p> <p><i>Conversion:</i> FYP Algorithm</p> <p><i>Output:</i> Trend-based decisions &amp; empathy</p> <p><i>Feedback:</i> Politicization of TikTok in the next election</p>	<p><i>Input:</i> Curated demands &amp; support</p> <p><i>Conversion:</i> Influencer network as a gatekeeper</p> <p><i>Output:</i> Electoral victory through narrative</p> <p><i>Feedback:</i> Strengthening the organized digital campaign model</p>

#### **4. Conclusion**

This study addresses the central puzzle of why different social media platforms—TikTok in Indonesia and Facebook in the Philippines—are more effective in shaping voter behavior despite similar levels of political digitalization. The findings show that platform effectiveness is determined by the interaction between technological features, political culture, and institutional contexts.

In Indonesia, TikTok influences first-time voters primarily through algorithm-driven, emotional, and viral content that encourages affective engagement rather than deliberative political evaluation. In contrast, Facebook in the Philippines operates as a more structured political arena, where organized influencer networks and coordinated disinformation actively shape political narratives and mobilization. These differences confirm that social media functions not only as a communication tool but as part of a broader political system, as conceptualized by David Easton, where platform-specific dynamics influence how political inputs are transformed into voter behavior.

Despite these variations, both countries experience similar challenges, including increased polarization, echo chambers, and misinformation, which undermine deliberative democratic processes. Therefore, while social media enhances political participation, it simultaneously poses risks to democratic quality. Addressing these challenges requires stronger digital literacy, greater algorithmic transparency, and more effective regulation of online political communication.

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