

## Ideological Contestation and Identity Politics in the Sustainability of Indonesian Elections

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### ABSTRACT

**Background:** Indonesia's electoral democracy continues to evolve alongside the growing influence of ideological rivalry and identity-based political narratives. In recent elections, political actors have increasingly used religious, ethnic, and social identities to attract public support, creating challenges for democratic consistency and national cohesion.

**Aims:** This study examines the relationship between political ideology and identity politics and their influence on the continuity and quality of electoral democracy in Indonesia.

**Methods:** A qualitative descriptive method was applied through literature analysis and the examination of political developments related to Indonesian elections. The study used secondary data from scholarly articles, books, and official reports.

**Result:** The study shows that identity politics has become a dominant strategy in electoral competition because it effectively shapes voter preferences and public opinion. However, excessive reliance on identity issues may intensify political polarization and reduce the focus on substantive policy debates. Meanwhile, ideological competition still plays an important role in maintaining democratic direction and political accountability.

**Conclusion:** The interaction between ideology and identity politics strongly influences the sustainability of elections in Indonesia. Strengthening civic education, democratic values, and inclusive political participation is necessary to support a more stable and substantive democratic process.

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## Introduction

Indonesia has long been recognized as one of the largest democratic countries in the world, particularly after the political reforms that followed the fall of the New Order regime in 1998. The transition toward a democratic system has encouraged broader political participation, competitive elections, and stronger public involvement in governance. Elections are not only procedural instruments for transferring power but also indicators of democratic maturity and institutional stability. In practice, however, Indonesia's electoral process continues to face challenges related to ideological fragmentation and the expansion of identity-based political mobilization. Political actors increasingly use religious, ethnic, and cultural sentiments to influence voter behavior during electoral contests. This phenomenon has raised concerns regarding democratic consolidation and the sustainability of fair political competition in Indonesia (Hasrul et al., 2025; Mietzner, 2022). Therefore, understanding the interaction between political ideology and identity politics has become increasingly important in contemporary Indonesian politics.

The development of identity politics in Indonesian elections has become more visible over the last decade, especially during presidential and regional electoral contests. Political campaigns frequently employ symbolic narratives connected to religion, ethnicity, and social identity to strengthen electoral support. Such strategies have proven effective in mobilizing voters because identity-related issues are emotionally persuasive and socially influential. Nevertheless, the increasing use of identity politics often intensifies political polarization and weakens social cohesion among citizens. Several electoral moments

in Indonesia demonstrated how identity-based campaigns generated social tensions both online and offline (Octavianne et al., [2024](#)). The rapid expansion of digital communication platforms has also amplified political narratives that divide society into competing identity groups. Consequently, electoral competition has gradually shifted from policy-oriented debates toward emotional and symbolic confrontation.

The persistence of ideological contestation remains another significant aspect of Indonesian electoral politics. Political ideology ideally functions as a framework that guides party orientation, public policy, and political accountability. In democratic systems, ideological competition encourages voters to evaluate political actors based on policy agendas and governance performance. However, the ideological distinction among political parties in Indonesia is often perceived as weak and inconsistent. Many parties tend to prioritize pragmatic coalition-building over clear ideological commitments (Haar, 2024). This condition creates uncertainty regarding the substantive direction of democratic development and reduces the quality of political representation. As a result, voters are frequently exposed to short-term populist narratives rather than long-term ideological programs.

The urgency of this study lies in the growing concern that identity politics may undermine democratic consistency in Indonesia if it continues to dominate electoral competition. Excessive polarization can reduce public trust in democratic institutions and encourage intolerance within society. Moreover, the dominance of identity-based mobilization may weaken rational political participation because voters become more influenced by emotional affiliation than policy evaluation. Recent political developments in Indonesia indicate that electoral dynamics are increasingly shaped by digital campaigns, social media polarization, and symbolic political narratives (Akmaliah & Nadzir, [2024](#); Octavianne et al., [2024](#)). These conditions require deeper academic attention because democratic sustainability depends not only on electoral procedures but also on the quality of political discourse. Examining the relationship between ideology and identity politics is therefore necessary to understand the broader challenges faced by Indonesian democracy today. This discussion is also relevant for evaluating whether elections continue to function as substantive democratic mechanisms or merely procedural contests for power.

Previous studies have widely discussed the rise of identity politics and ideological transformation in Indonesia's democratic landscape. (Hidayah et al., [2025](#); Widian et al., [2023](#)) argued that democratic decline in Indonesia is closely related to populist strategies and identity-based mobilization during elections. Similarly, (Crosson & Tsebelis, [2022](#); Schedler, [2023](#)) emphasized that political polarization has significantly reshaped voter alignment and party strategies in recent electoral contests. Research by (Bentzen & Gokmen, [2023](#)) found that religious narratives have become increasingly influential in determining political legitimacy and electoral outcomes. In addition, Lim (2022) highlighted the important role of social media in accelerating political fragmentation and ideological radicalization. Other scholars have also examined how digital political communication strengthens identity-based political narratives and emotional campaigning (Bliuc et al., [2026](#); Uddin, [2026](#)). Collectively, these studies confirm that identity politics has become an integral component of Indonesia's contemporary electoral dynamics.

Although previous research provides important insights, most studies focus primarily on the short-term impact of identity politics during specific elections. Existing literature often emphasizes political polarization, populism, or digital political campaigns separately without comprehensively examining their relationship with ideological consistency in electoral democracy. Several studies also concentrate on elite political behavior while paying less attention to how ideological contestation influences democratic sustainability in broader institutional contexts (von Malmborg, [2024](#); Vries et al., [2021](#)). Furthermore, there remains limited discussion regarding the balance between ideological competition and identity-based mobilization within Indonesia's evolving democratic structure. Earlier research tends to portray ideology and identity politics as isolated phenomena rather than interconnected political forces. Consequently, the long-term implications of these dynamics for electoral consistency and

democratic consolidation remain insufficiently explored. This limitation creates a significant conceptual gap that requires further scholarly investigation.

Another important limitation in prior studies concerns the lack of integrative analysis between democratic theory and empirical electoral developments in Indonesia after the post-pandemic political transition. Recent elections have demonstrated new patterns of voter behavior shaped by digitalization, economic uncertainty, and the expansion of political populism (Gozgor, [2022](#); Guriev & Papaioannou, [2022](#)). However, only a few scholars have critically examined how these transformations affect ideological orientation and democratic resilience simultaneously. Existing studies also rarely explore how identity politics may coexist with ideological competition rather than entirely replacing it. In fact, ideological narratives and identity-based strategies often interact dynamically within electoral campaigns. Understanding this interaction is essential for explaining why Indonesian elections continue to experience both democratic progress and democratic vulnerability at the same time. Therefore, a more comprehensive approach is needed to bridge theoretical discussions and empirical realities in Indonesian electoral politics.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to analyze the contestation between political ideology and identity politics and examine their influence on the consistency of elections in Indonesia. The study seeks to explain how ideological competition and identity-based mobilization shape democratic practices, voter behavior, and political stability within electoral processes. Theoretically, this research contributes to the broader discussion on democratic consolidation and electoral politics in developing democracies. Practically, the findings are expected to provide insights for policymakers, electoral institutions, and political actors in promoting more inclusive and substantive democratic participation. This study also offers a critical perspective on the challenges faced by Indonesia in maintaining democratic quality amid increasing political polarization. By addressing the existing research gap, the paper aims to strengthen academic understanding of the complex relationship between ideology, identity politics, and electoral sustainability in contemporary Indonesia.

## **Method**

### **Research Design**

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design to examine the contestation between political ideology and identity politics in the consistency of Indonesian elections. A qualitative approach was selected because the research focuses on interpreting political phenomena, understanding social dynamics, and analyzing ideological narratives within electoral practices. The design enabled the researcher to explore complex political interactions that cannot be adequately measured through numerical analysis alone. In addition, the study adopted a case study orientation by focusing on electoral developments in Indonesia during the post-reform democratic period, particularly between 2019 and 2024. This period was chosen because it reflects the increasing prominence of identity-based political mobilization and ideological polarization in national and regional elections. Through this design, the study sought to generate a contextual and in-depth understanding of how political ideology and identity politics influence democratic sustainability in Indonesia.

### **Participant**

The population of this study consisted of academic literature, political reports, policy documents, media publications, and electoral studies discussing Indonesian democracy, political ideology, and identity politics. The study used purposive sampling to select relevant sources that directly addressed electoral dynamics in Indonesia. The inclusion criteria comprised peer-reviewed journal articles, books, official reports, and credible institutional publications published between 2021 and 2026. Several foundational references published before 2021 were also included to strengthen theoretical explanations and historical context. Sources that lacked academic credibility, clear authorship, or relevance to Indonesian electoral politics were excluded from the analysis. In total, the study analyzed approximately 25 academic and institutional references obtained from databases such as Scopus, Google Scholar,

ScienceDirect, and government publications. The selection of these sources was intended to ensure data relevance, credibility, and analytical depth.

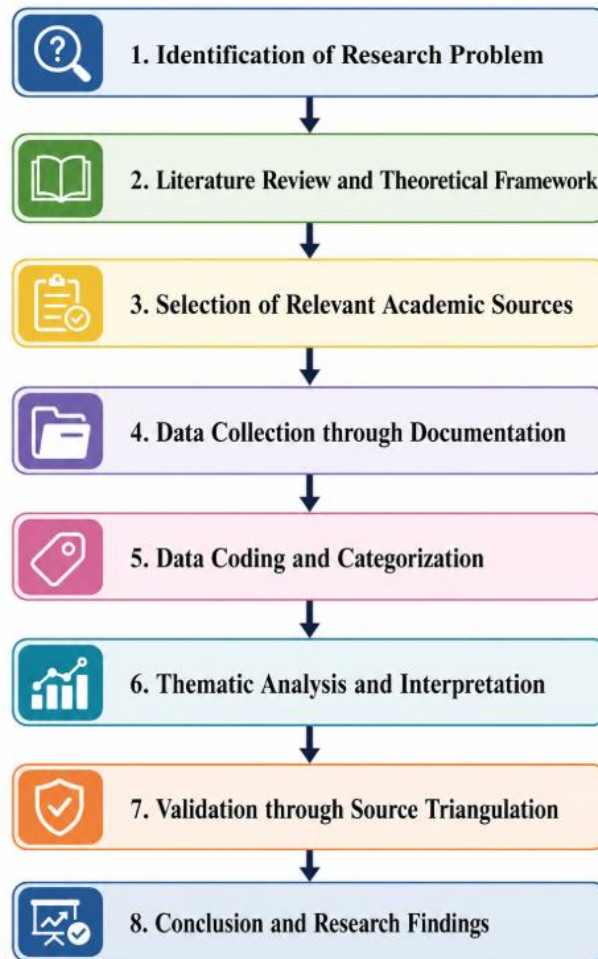
### **Instrument**

The primary research instrument was a documentation and literature review guide developed to systematically collect and categorize data related to political ideology, identity politics, electoral behavior, and democratic consistency. The instrument included several analytical indicators, such as patterns of ideological contestation, forms of identity-based mobilization, political polarization, voter behavior, campaign strategies, and democratic implications. In addition, the researcher used a thematic analysis framework to identify recurring concepts and political narratives within the selected documents. The instrument was designed based on democratic theory, electoral studies, and qualitative political research frameworks commonly used in social science research. To support consistency during the coding process, the researcher also developed a data classification matrix consisting of themes, subthemes, and supporting evidence from each source. This approach facilitated systematic comparison between findings from different references.

### **Validity and Reliability of the Instrument**

To ensure the validity of the study, the researcher applied content validity through expert judgment and source triangulation. Several academic references from recognized scholars in political science and democratic studies were used to verify the relevance and consistency of analytical categories. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing findings from journal articles, institutional reports, and political analyses to minimize interpretive bias. Reliability was strengthened through repeated reading, systematic coding, and cross-checking of thematic interpretations throughout the analysis process. In addition, the researcher maintained an audit trail documenting data selection, coding procedures, and interpretation stages to improve transparency and replicability. These procedures were intended to enhance the trustworthiness and credibility of the qualitative findings.

### **Research Flowchart**



**Figure 1.** Research Flowchart of the Study on Ideological Contestation and Identity Politics in Indonesian Elections

The research procedure began with the identification of the primary issue concerning ideological contestation and identity politics within Indonesian elections. After determining the research focus, the researcher conducted a literature review and established a theoretical framework to guide the analytical process. Relevant academic sources were then selected systematically based on inclusion criteria related to democratic studies, electoral politics, and identity-based political mobilization. Subsequently, data were collected through documentation techniques and organized according to thematic categories. The collected data were coded and categorized to identify recurring patterns and political narratives. Thematic analysis was then conducted to interpret the relationship between ideology, identity politics, and electoral consistency. To ensure the credibility of the findings, the researcher applied source triangulation before formulating the final conclusions and research findings.

**Data Collection Procedure**

The data collection process was conducted in several systematic stages. First, the researcher identified key issues related to political ideology, identity politics, and electoral consistency in Indonesia. Second, relevant academic references and political documents were collected from reputable databases and institutional sources. Third, the collected data were screened based on inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure academic relevance and credibility. After the selection process, the researcher organized the data according to thematic categories related to ideological contestation, identity mobilization, democratic polarization, and electoral sustainability. Important statements, concepts, and arguments from each source were then documented and coded systematically. Finally, all collected data were compiled into an analytical framework to facilitate interpretation and synthesis of findings.

**Data Analysis**

The study applied thematic analysis to interpret the collected qualitative data. The analysis began with data reduction, in which irrelevant information was removed while significant findings related to the research objectives were retained. Subsequently, the researcher conducted open coding to identify recurring themes and conceptual patterns within the literature. The coded data were then categorized into broader analytical themes, including ideological competition, identity politics, democratic polarization, and electoral consistency. After categorization, the researcher interpreted the relationships among themes to explain how ideological and identity-based political dynamics influence Indonesian elections. The analysis process emphasized interpretive depth and contextual understanding rather than statistical measurement. To support analytical consistency, the researcher used comparative analysis techniques across multiple references and political contexts.

### **Research Ethics**

This study adhered to academic research ethics throughout the research process. All sources used in the study were properly cited following APA style guidelines to acknowledge intellectual contributions and avoid plagiarism. The researcher ensured that all referenced materials originated from credible and publicly accessible academic sources. Since the study relied exclusively on secondary data and documentation, no direct human participants were involved. Nevertheless, the principles of confidentiality, academic honesty, objectivity, and transparency were strictly maintained during data collection and analysis. The researcher also avoided selective interpretation by presenting findings based on balanced and evidence-based analysis. These ethical considerations were essential to maintaining the integrity and credibility of the research process.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Results**

The analysis demonstrates that identity politics has become one of the most influential elements in Indonesia's contemporary electoral dynamics. Various political studies indicate that candidates and political groups increasingly use religious, ethnic, and cultural narratives to attract public support during elections. This pattern was especially visible in recent electoral contests, where campaign strategies relied heavily on symbolic issues and emotional narratives rather than detailed policy discussions (Bittner, 2023; Nai, 2021). The growing use of identity-based approaches has contributed to stronger political polarization within society. In many cases, electoral competition no longer centers primarily on governance programs, but instead emphasizes social affiliation and collective identity. These conditions indicate a gradual transformation in the character of democratic competition in Indonesia.

The findings also reveal that ideological consistency among political parties has weakened over time. Although most political parties formally maintain ideological identities, practical political interests often dominate coalition formation and campaign strategies. Electoral alliances are commonly established based on strategic calculations rather than shared ideological principles (Aspinall, 2021). As a consequence, ideological differences between parties become less visible to voters. Several studies further suggest that many voters are more influenced by symbolic representation, public image, and identity-related narratives than by long-term policy agendas (Warburton, 2021). This situation reduces the substantive quality of democratic competition and weakens policy-oriented political discourse.

Another important result concerns the increasing influence of digital media on electoral behavior and political communication. Social media platforms have accelerated the dissemination of political narratives, including provocative and identity-based content. According to Lim (2022), digital communication environments often strengthen political segmentation by encouraging the formation of homogeneous online communities. The findings indicate that political discussions on digital platforms

frequently intensify hostility between competing groups and reduce opportunities for constructive democratic dialogue. In addition, the rapid spread of misinformation during electoral periods contributes to public distrust and social tension. These developments show that digital political communication plays a major role in shaping contemporary electoral dynamics in Indonesia.

Despite the strong presence of identity politics, ideological orientation still retains an important role in Indonesian democracy. Political ideology continues to influence party legitimacy, governance direction, and policy formulation. However, ideological narratives are frequently overshadowed by short-term electoral interests and symbolic political strategies. Özel & Aydin (2026) argues that this condition may weaken democratic consolidation because electoral competition becomes increasingly transactional and less focused on substantive political programs. Therefore, maintaining ideological clarity remains important for strengthening democratic accountability and preserving electoral stability in Indonesia.

**Table 1.** Summary of Research Findings

| No. | Findings                             | Explanation   | References                    |
|-----|--------------------------------------|---|-------------------------------|
| 1   | Expansion of Identity Politics       | Electoral campaigns increasingly emphasize religious, ethnic, and cultural issues to influence voter preferences. | (Zingher, 2023)               |
| 2   | Declining Ideological Consistency    | Political coalitions are largely shaped by pragmatic interests rather than ideological alignment.                 | (Dold & Krieger, 2023)        |
| 3   | Digital Media Polarization           | Social media intensifies political fragmentation and identity-based mobilization.                                 | (Octavianne et al., 2024c)    |
| 4   | Weakening Policy-Oriented Debate     | Electoral discourse shifts from policy substance to symbolic political narratives.                                | (Wolton & Crow, 2022)         |
| 5   | Persistence of Ideological Influence | Ideology still contributes to governance orientation and democratic legitimacy.                                   | (Ecker-Ehrhardt et al., 2024) |

Overall, the findings suggest that the relationship between political ideology and identity politics significantly affects the consistency of Indonesian elections. The growing dominance of identity-based mobilization presents challenges for democratic inclusiveness and political stability. Nevertheless, ideological competition remains necessary for maintaining democratic accountability and encouraging more substantive electoral practices.

### Discussion

The findings indicate that identity politics has evolved from a complementary electoral strategy into a dominant mechanism of political mobilization in Indonesia. This transformation reflects a broader shift in democratic competition, where emotional affiliation increasingly outweighs rational policy evaluation. From the perspective of social identity theory, political actors strategically construct collective identities to strengthen in-group solidarity and electoral loyalty (Orofino, 2021; Turner-Zwinkels & van Zomeren, 2021). The Indonesian case demonstrates that identity narratives based on religion, ethnicity, and cultural symbolism are capable of simplifying complex political realities into emotionally persuasive messages. These findings support the arguments of (Suhardi, 2025), who

observed that identity-based campaigns have become highly effective in mobilizing fragmented voter groups within Indonesia's democratic environment. However, this study extends previous discussions by emphasizing that identity politics is not merely an electoral tool, but also a structural response to ideological ambiguity among political parties. Consequently, the dominance of identity politics should be interpreted not only as a cultural phenomenon but also as a symptom of institutional weakness in party-based democratic representation.

The weakening ideological consistency among Indonesian political parties further reinforces this interpretation. The findings suggest that many political parties no longer maintain clear ideological distinctions because electoral pragmatism has become the primary determinant of coalition-building and political strategy. This condition aligns with Kirchheimer's "catch-all party" theory, which explains how modern political parties tend to dilute ideological commitments in order to maximize electoral support across broader social groups. In the Indonesian context, such pragmatism creates a political environment where ideological narratives become secondary to strategic alliances and electability calculations. Previous studies by (Sajida, [2026](#)) similarly noted that ideological fluidity has become increasingly common in post-reform Indonesian politics. Nevertheless, this study argues that ideological weakening does not simply reduce party differentiation; it also indirectly creates opportunities for identity politics to flourish. When policy-oriented competition declines, symbolic and emotional narratives become more politically effective. Therefore, the erosion of ideological clarity contributes to the transformation of elections from programmatic contests into symbolic political spectacles.

Another important issue emerging from the findings concerns the role of digital media in accelerating political polarization. The study demonstrates that social media platforms intensify the circulation of emotionally charged political narratives, including misinformation and identity-based propaganda. This phenomenon can be understood through the framework of digital populism, where algorithmic communication systems encourage the spread of polarizing content due to its high engagement value. (Yuniar et al., [2026](#)) argued that Indonesia's digital political landscape has facilitated the growth of echo chambers that reinforce partisan hostility and social fragmentation. The present study supports these conclusions while further highlighting the interaction between technological structures and political strategy. Political polarization in Indonesia is not solely driven by ideological disagreement, but also by digital systems that reward sensationalism and emotional confrontation. As a result, democratic discourse increasingly prioritizes visibility and virality over deliberative political engagement. This dynamic illustrates how technological transformation can reshape democratic participation in ways that challenge democratic inclusiveness and rational political communication.

The findings also reveal that identity politics generates ambivalent consequences for democratic participation. On one hand, identity-based mobilization can increase voter engagement by creating emotional attachment and collective political belonging. This condition is consistent with democratic participation theories suggesting that emotional identification may strengthen political involvement among marginalized or underrepresented groups. On the other hand, excessive reliance on identity narratives risks deepening societal polarization and weakening democratic cohesion. Research conducted by (Reiljan & Ryan, [2021](#)) similarly found that highly polarized electoral environments often reduce institutional trust and increase intolerance toward opposing political groups. In Indonesia, the persistence of antagonistic online discourse and symbolic political labeling reflects this democratic vulnerability. The current study expands earlier findings by arguing that the problem does not lie in identity itself, but in the instrumentalization of identity for short-term electoral gain. Thus, the challenge for Indonesian democracy is not eliminating identity politics entirely, but preventing identity narratives from undermining inclusive democratic values and institutional legitimacy.

Although identity politics dominates contemporary electoral discourse, the study confirms that political ideology still retains strategic importance within Indonesia's democratic system. Ideology continues to shape governance orientation, public policy direction, and political legitimacy, even when it becomes less visible during electoral campaigns. This finding partially contradicts arguments suggesting

that ideology has become irrelevant in contemporary Indonesian politics. Instead, the study demonstrates that ideology remains institutionally significant but is increasingly overshadowed by transactional and symbolic political strategies. Theoretical discussions on democratic consolidation emphasize that stable democracies require ideological consistency to maintain accountability and policy continuity (Jin & Yang, [n.d.](#)). In this regard, the Indonesian experience illustrates a tension between democratic procedures and democratic substance. Elections may continue to function procedurally, yet substantive democratic quality weakens when ideological debates are replaced by emotional polarization. Consequently, this study contributes conceptually by showing that ideological decline and identity politics should not be analyzed separately, but rather as interconnected dimensions within evolving democratic systems.

Furthermore, the findings suggest that Indonesia's electoral dynamics reflect broader global democratic trends characterized by populism, political fragmentation, and declining trust in institutions. Similar developments have been observed in several democratic countries where identity-based populism has challenged traditional ideological competition. However, Indonesia presents a distinct case because identity politics operates within a highly pluralistic social structure shaped by religious diversity, ethnic complexity, and post-authoritarian democratic transition. This contextual condition explains why identity narratives possess particularly strong mobilizing power in Indonesian elections. Previous comparative studies often focus on Western populism or majoritarian democracies, thereby overlooking the unique interaction between identity and democratic consolidation in Southeast Asian contexts (Tudor & Slater, [2021](#)). The present study contributes to the global literature by positioning Indonesia as an important case for understanding how identity politics evolves in multicultural democracies with relatively weak ideological institutionalization. This perspective broadens existing theoretical discussions regarding the relationship between democracy, identity, and political legitimacy in developing democracies.

At the practical level, the findings imply that strengthening democratic resilience in Indonesia requires institutional as well as societal transformation. Electoral institutions, political parties, and civil society organizations must promote policy-oriented political engagement rather than symbolic polarization. Civic education also becomes increasingly important because democratic sustainability depends on citizens' ability to critically evaluate political narratives beyond identity affiliation. Previous studies by (Kiess, [2026](#)) emphasized that democratic resilience is closely linked to political literacy and institutional trust. The current study supports this argument while suggesting that democratic education in Indonesia should specifically address the risks associated with digital polarization and manipulative identity-based mobilization. Without stronger democratic literacy, elections may continue to reproduce social fragmentation instead of substantive representation. Therefore, improving the quality of democratic participation requires not only institutional reform but also the development of a more critical and inclusive political culture.

Overall, this study fills an important gap within the existing literature by integrating discussions of ideology, identity politics, and electoral consistency into a single analytical framework. Earlier studies often examined these variables separately, thereby limiting understanding of their interconnected influence on democratic sustainability. By combining institutional analysis, political communication perspectives, and democratic theory, this study offers a more comprehensive interpretation of Indonesia's contemporary electoral challenges. The findings demonstrate that identity politics does not emerge independently, but develops within contexts characterized by ideological weakening, digital polarization, and pragmatic electoral competition. This conceptual contribution provides a broader perspective for understanding democratic transformation in developing countries. In addition, the study reinforces the argument that maintaining democratic quality requires balancing political participation with ideological accountability and social inclusiveness. As such, the Indonesian case contributes not only to national political discourse but also to wider global debates concerning the future of democracy in polarized societies.

## **Implications**

The findings of this study imply that the sustainability of Indonesian democracy depends not only on the procedural implementation of elections but also on the quality of political discourse that develops during electoral competition. The increasing dominance of identity politics indicates the need for stronger democratic institutions, clearer ideological positioning among political parties, and broader civic education capable of encouraging critical political participation. From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the understanding that ideological weakening and identity-based mobilization are interconnected processes that shape democratic consolidation in developing democracies. Practically, the study highlights the importance of strengthening policy-oriented political communication and digital literacy to reduce polarization and prevent the manipulation of social identities for short-term electoral interests. These implications suggest that maintaining electoral consistency in Indonesia requires balancing democratic freedom with inclusive and substantive political engagement.

## **Limitations**

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the research relied entirely on secondary data derived from academic literature, institutional reports, and political analyses without direct field observation or interviews with political actors and voters. Consequently, the findings primarily reflect interpretative analysis rather than empirical behavioral measurement. Second, the study focused mainly on national electoral dynamics within the post-reform Indonesian context, which may limit broader comparative generalization across different political systems or regional elections. In addition, the rapid development of digital political communication may continuously reshape electoral behavior in ways that are difficult to fully capture within a literature-based study. Therefore, the conclusions presented in this research should be interpreted within the contextual boundaries of qualitative political analysis.

## **Suggestions**

Future research is recommended to adopt mixed-method or empirical approaches involving surveys, interviews, or discourse analysis to examine how identity politics directly influences voter behavior and democratic attitudes in Indonesia. Comparative studies between national and regional elections may also provide deeper insights into variations in ideological contestation and identity-based mobilization across different social contexts. In addition, future scholars should explore the long-term impact of digital political communication on democratic trust, institutional legitimacy, and political polarization, particularly among younger voters. For policymakers and electoral institutions, strengthening democratic literacy programs and promoting issue-based political campaigns are necessary to encourage more substantive democratic participation. Political parties should also reinforce ideological consistency and reduce excessive reliance on symbolic identity narratives in order to improve democratic accountability and electoral stability in Indonesia.

## **Conclusion**

This study concludes that the interaction between political ideology and identity politics significantly shapes the consistency and quality of electoral democracy in Indonesia. The findings demonstrate that identity-based political mobilization has become increasingly dominant in electoral competition, particularly through the use of religious, ethnic, and symbolic narratives amplified by digital media platforms. At the same time, the weakening ideological consistency of political parties has contributed to the rise of pragmatic and emotionally driven political strategies, reducing the emphasis on substantive policy debates. Although identity politics may strengthen short-term political participation, excessive polarization risks weakening democratic inclusiveness, institutional trust, and social cohesion. Nevertheless, political ideology continues to play an important role in maintaining governance direction, democratic accountability, and institutional legitimacy within Indonesia's political system. Therefore,

sustaining democratic stability in Indonesia requires stronger civic education, more policy-oriented political communication, and greater commitment from political actors to promote inclusive and substantive democratic practices rather than divisive identity-based competition.

### Author Contributions Statement

Refaldy Bernalis Fasya contributed to the conceptualization of the study, research design, data analysis, and manuscript drafting. Rican Aldiano was responsible for literature collection, data organization, and methodological development. Queena Tia Rumaysa contributed to data interpretation, theoretical analysis, and manuscript editing. Exciyana Zevany participated in literature review, formatting, and final manuscript preparation. Rudi Santoso, as the supervising author, provided academic guidance, critical review, methodological evaluation, and overall supervision throughout the research and writing process. All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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