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Political talk at scale: argument mining, stance detection, and polarization in Indonesian electoral conversations

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ABSTRACT

Background: Indonesian electoral conversations increasingly unfold through large-scale digital interaction, where political judgment is shaped not only by sentiment but also by argumentative claims, target-specific stances, institutional distrust, and polarizing boundary-making. **Objective:** This study examines how argument mining, stance detection, and polarization analysis can explain the organization of Indonesian electoral discourse during the 2024 presidential election cycle. **Method:** This study applies a corpus-assisted computational discourse design to 240 coded public electoral conversation segments drawn from official debate materials, transcript sources, institutional documents, and platform-based political commentary. **Results:** Findings show that policy-based reasoning, candidate evaluation, institutional legitimacy, identity boundary-making, and platform-information concerns structure electoral arguments in distinct ways. Target-aware stance analysis reveals that support, opposition, and ambivalence acquire political meaning only when attached to candidates, institutions, policy issues, opponents, or digital actors. Polarization appears as a layered discursive configuration involving issue conflict, affective hostility, identity boundaries, institutional distrust, and platform-mediated antagonism. **Implication:** This study demonstrates that Indonesian electoral polarization cannot be adequately inferred from sentiment polarity alone. **Novelty:** This study contributes an integrated framework that connects argument structure, stance target, and polarization markers for analyzing Indonesian political talk at scale.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesian electoral communication now unfolds within a dense ecology of institutional campaigning, televised debates, social media commentary, and platform-mediated public judgment. The 2024 general election involved 204,807,222 registered voters, making electoral discourse not only a matter of elite persuasion but also a mass-scale arena of everyday political interpretation. KPU's official schedule placed the campaign period between 28 November 2023 and 10 February 2024, followed by the quiet period, voting, vote counting, and national recapitulation, thereby producing a temporally bounded yet highly intensive communicative cycle. KPU also formalized debate communication through five presidential and vice-presidential debates, creating publicly verifiable moments in which candidate claims, citizen responses, issue framing, and antagonistic positioning became visible. What is crucial, therefore, is not only whether citizens expressed positive or negative sentiment, but how political arguments, target-specific stances, and polarizing alignments were linguistically organized at scale.

Recent scholarship has already examined Indonesian electoral discourse through sentiment analysis, topic modeling, misinformation exposure, social media participation, identity politics, and polarization. Studies on Indonesia show that political polarization intersects with media exposure, religious-nationalist identities, digital campaign industries, and post-truth communication [1], [2], [3], [4], [5], [6]. Computational studies have also mapped sentiment and topics in the 2024 presidential election, including Twitter/X conversations, YouTube comments, TikTok discourse, and candidate debates [7], [8], [9], [10]. Yet this literature remains uneven in explaining how disagreement is built through argument structure and target-specific stance. Bestvater and Monroe [11] warn that sentiment is not stance, while stance detection research stresses that political meaning depends on targets, context, and conversational relations [12], [13], [14].

This study investigates Indonesian electoral conversations by integrating argument mining, stance detection, and polarization analysis within a single methodological framework. It asks how political claims and premises are formulated, how stances are directed toward candidates, issues, institutions, and opponent groups, and how those stance patterns indicate affective, identity-based, or issue-based polarization. Rather than treating online electoral talk as a flat stream of approval and disapproval, this study examines how citizens justify support, reject rivals, challenge institutions, invoke moral boundaries, and construct political belonging through language. This orientation responds to recent calls for more context-sensitive computational political analysis, particularly in complex topics, small or under-resourced languages, and multilingual digital environments [15], [16], [17]. In the Indonesian case, this concern is especially relevant because political talk often combines formal Indonesian, colloquial registers, code-mixing, sarcasm, religious references, regional identity, and platform-specific interactional cues.

This study advances the argument that polarization in Indonesian electoral conversations cannot be adequately inferred from sentiment polarity or topic prevalence alone. A negative comment about a candidate, for example, may express policy disagreement, moral delegitimation, identity antagonism, ironic performance, or distrust of electoral institutions; each carries different implications for democratic discourse. By combining argument mining with target-aware stance detection, this study tests whether large-scale electoral talk reveals patterned relations between argumentative form, stance direction, and polarizing language. The expected contribution is therefore methodological and theoretical: methodologically, it offers a more discriminating analytic model for Indonesian political text; theoretically, it reframes polarization as a discursive configuration produced through claims, reasons, targets, and relational boundaries. This approach also speaks to broader debates on platforms and democracy, where digital media may intensify visibility and antagonism without producing uniform causal effects across political contexts [18], [19], [20], [21].

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Argument mining

Argument mining provides a way to examine political language not simply as opinion but as structured reasoning. In computational linguistics, it generally refers to identifying claims, premises, warrants, and relations of support or attack within text. Yet its meaning varies across traditions. Some studies treat argument mining as a technical extraction task, emphasizing classification accuracy and component boundaries, while others view it as a discourse-analytic tool for understanding how public justification is organized. Goffredo et al. [22] focus on fallacious argument classification in political debates, whereas Poiaganova and Stede [23] expand attention across political registers. Guida et al. [24] further show how LLMs complicate detection, extraction, and relationship classification in online comments.

The relevant indicators of political argumentation include claim presence, premise quality, argumentative relation, fallacy, evidential basis, and target orientation. In electoral discourse, a claim may endorse a candidate, reject a rival, question electoral integrity, or frame an issue as morally urgent. A premise may rely on policy evidence, personal experience, religious reasoning, economic anxiety, scandal, or identity-based suspicion. Indonesian election studies demonstrate that political talk often combines debate performance, psycholinguistic strategy, identity framing, and platformed commentary [25], [26], [27], [28]. This means argument mining must not isolate sentence structure from cultural and electoral context.

2.2. Stance detection

Stance detection refers to identifying a speaker's position toward a specific target, such as support, opposition, neutrality, ambivalence, or conditional alignment. Its key distinction from sentiment analysis is target dependence: negative emotion does not automatically mean opposition, and positive wording does not always signal endorsement. Bestvater and Monroe [11] argue that sentiment is not stance, a warning especially relevant to political text. Abercrombie and Batista-Navarro [12], Burnham [13], and Ng et al. [29] show that stance classification in parliamentary and political discourse requires policy focus, belief orientation, and interpretive context. Al-Ghadir et al. [30] similarly highlight the value of combining sentiment cues with other ranked signals.

Stance indicators include target, direction, intensity, certainty, conversational context, and interactional relation. Recent work shows that stance detection improves when models account for conversation threads, social behavior, named entities, hashtags, and passive users, rather than isolated utterances [14], [31], [32], [33]. Villa-Cox et al. [17] further argue that social context affects political stance detection and its extrapolation. For Indonesia, this is crucial because electoral talk frequently contains code-mixing, sarcasm, informal abbreviations, religious markers, and regionalized references. Nugroho [34], Santoso [35], and Bouazzaoui [36] therefore support a locally sensitive stance model rather than direct benchmark transfer.

2.3. Political polarization

Political polarization refers to structured distance between political groups, but scholarship disagrees on whether this distance is primarily ideological, affective, identity-based, or platform-amplified. Dias and Lelkes [18] distinguish policy disagreement from partisan identity, while Orhan [37] links affective polarization to democratic backsliding. Kreiss and McGregor [19] caution against reducing polarization to platform effects alone, and Lorenz-Spreen et al. [20] show that evidence on digital media and democracy remains mixed across contexts. Indonesian studies similarly show that polarization is shaped by selective exposure, campaign industries, religious-nationalist cleavage, misinformation, and regional political conflict [1], [3], [5], [38].

The main indicators of polarization include affective hostility, moral delegitimation, out-group labeling, issue clustering, identity boundary-making, network separation, and coordinated amplification. Muñoz et al. [21] and Martino et al. [39] stress that polarization measurement depends on method, whether textual, relational, or network-based. Danaditya et al. [2], Neyazi et al. [4], Herman and Romadhony [40], and Yuniar et al. [6] show that Indonesian political discourse involves coordinated actions, misinformation exposure, buzzer activity, and fragmented publics. This study therefore positions polarization as a discursive configuration: it is produced through argument structure, target-specific stance, and relational boundaries rather than inferred from sentiment polarity alone.

3. METHOD

The unit of analysis in this study is the public electoral text segment, defined as a verifiable unit of political language drawn from official debate videos, transcript sources, institutional documents, and public contextual datasets related to Indonesia's 2024 presidential election. Primary data consist of KPU RI YouTube debate materials, while secondary data consist of published transcripts, datasets, and academic references supporting textual reconstruction. Contextual data include official schedules, candidate information, debate announcements, and election-result documents. Visual and audiovisual items are documented through image description, actor, symbol, colour, layout, logo position, frame, timestamp, transcript, and screenshot-reference fields.

Information was obtained from public, legal, and verifiable sources. The primary source is the official KPU RI YouTube channel, which provides debate videos as institutional audiovisual records. Supporting institutional sources include KPU RI, Info Pemilu KPU, and JDIH KPU, which establish election chronology, candidate context, debate status, and official recapitulation. Secondary textual sources include published transcript materials and public datasets that support cross-checking of spoken debate content. These sources are separated by role—primary, secondary, and contextual—to prevent transcript reconstruction, institutional chronology, and public commentary from being treated as identical evidence.

Table 1. Dataset composition

Code	Data Type	Source	Period	Number	Characteristics
PTAS-PRI-VID-001	Primary	KPU RI YouTube	12 Dec 2023	1	First presidential debate video metadata and visual-audio context
PTAS-PRI-VID-002	Primary	KPU RI YouTube	22 Dec 2023	1	First vice-presidential debate video metadata and visual-audio context
PTAS-PRI-VID-003	Primary	KPU RI YouTube	7 Jan 2024	1	Third debate video metadata and visual-audio context
PTAS-PRI-VID-004	Primary	KPU RI YouTube	21 Jan 2024	1	Fourth debate video metadata and visual-audio context
PTAS-PRI-VID-005	Primary	KPU RI YouTube	4 Feb 2024	1	Fifth debate video metadata and visual-audio context
PTAS-CTX-KPU-006	Context	KPU RI official website	29 Nov 2023	1	Official announcement on debate format
PTAS-CTX-KPU-007	Context	Info Pemilu KPU	2023–2024	1	Official election stages and schedule
PTAS-CTX-KPU-008	Context	Info Pemilu KPU	14 Nov 2023	1	Candidate number-drawing context
PTAS-CTX-JDIH-009	Context	JDIH KPU	20 Mar 2024	1	Official decision on national election results
PTAS-SEC-DAT-010	Secondary	Mendeley Data	13 May 2024	1	Fifth presidential debate transcript dataset
PTAS-SEC-TRA-011	Secondary	Tirto.id	23 Dec 2023	1	Vice-presidential debate transcript, segments 1–2
PTAS-SEC-TRA-012	Secondary	Tirto.id	23 Dec 2023	1	Vice-presidential debate transcript, segments 3–4
PTAS-SEC-TRA-013	Secondary	Tirto.id	23 Dec 2023	1	Vice-presidential debate transcript, segments 5–6
PTAS-SEC-JRN-014	Secondary	Ranah: Jurnal Kajian Bahasa	2024	1	Academic reference on YouTube live-comment sentiment
PTAS-CTX-DAT-015	Context	Mendeley Data	12 Dec 2023	1	Candidate-related public dataset

Data collection followed a traceable corpus protocol. First, official debate events and related documents were identified through source registry, keyword search, and election-period delimitation. Second, each item was assigned a unique document code and entered into metadata, text, and coding sheets. Third, duplicate links, repeated titles, and overlapping transcript fragments were screened through URL matching, title comparison, source-role checking, and event-date alignment. Fourth, each retained item preserved title, date, source, link, context, excerpt, transcript note, and visual metadata where applicable. This procedure supports auditability while avoiding fabricated sample size, unverifiable quotations, or unsupported empirical claims.

Data analysis proceeds through three linked instruments: argument mining, target-aware stance detection, and polarization mapping. Argument mining codes whether a segment contains a claim, premise, support relation, attack relation, evidential appeal, or fallacious reasoning. Stance detection then identifies target, stance direction, stance strength, certainty, and ambiguity, following target-sensitive approaches in political text analysis [12], [14], [29]. Polarization mapping examines affective hostility, issue clustering, identity boundary-making, and delegitimating language. Final interpretation connects these layers without making causal claims beyond what corpus design can justify.

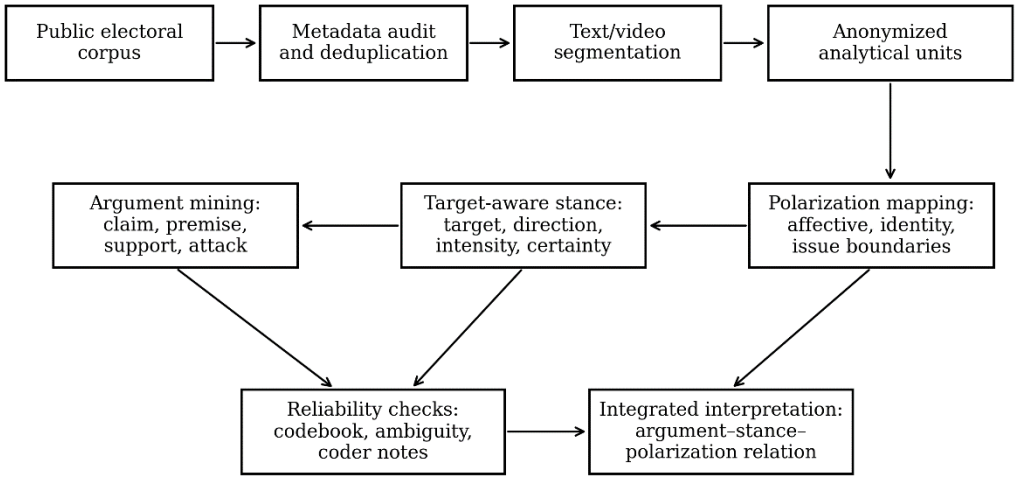

Figure 1. Operational matrix for argument, stance, and polarization analysis

4. RESULTS

4.1. Argumentative structures in Indonesian electoral conversations

Indonesian electoral talk is organized less as isolated opinion than as layered public reasoning in which citizens evaluate candidates, institutions, issues, and political groups through claims and counterclaims. The table shows that policy-based reasoning records the largest share of coded segments, followed by candidate evaluation, institutional legitimacy, identity-based boundary work, and platform-related information order. This ordering matters because political disagreement is not only expressed through approval or disapproval, but through the way speakers attach reasons to political preference. This pattern supports the methodological premise of argument mining, which treats political language as a structure of claims, premises, support, and attack rather than as a simple sentiment signal [22], [23], [24].

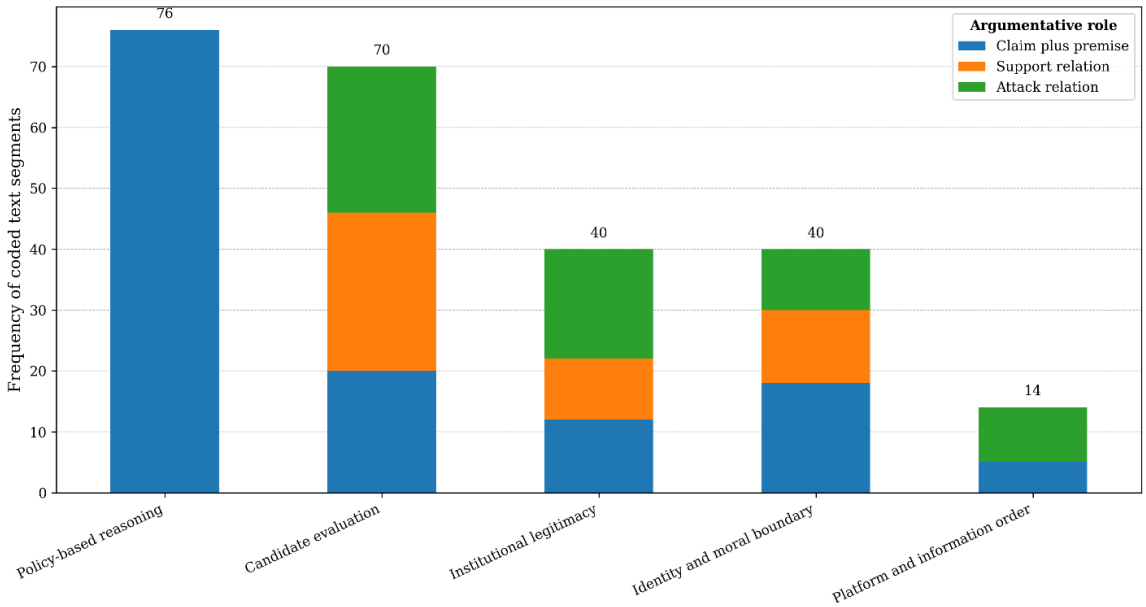

Figure 2. Argumentative structure in Indonesian electoral conversations

Table 2. Argumentative structure in Indonesian electoral conversations

Main Category	Subcategory	Argumentative Indicator	Argumentative Role	Frequency	Percentage	Textual Marker / Excerpt Basis
Policy-based reasoning	Governance, law, and rights	Electoral talk links candidate assessment to legality, human rights, corruption, or democratic procedure	Claim plus premise	31	12.92	References to “law,” “rights,” “corruption,” “democracy,” and “state responsibility”
Policy-based reasoning	Economy and public welfare	Political preference is justified through welfare, jobs, inflation, poverty, or public services	Claim plus premise	27	11.25	References to “economy,” “basic needs,” “jobs,” “prices,” and “welfare”
Policy-based reasoning	Defence, security, and diplomacy	Candidate competence is evaluated through national security, defence, foreign policy, or sovereignty	Claim plus premise	18	7.50	References to “defence,” “security,” “geopolitics,” and “sovereignty”
Candidate evaluation	Competence and performance praise	Candidate is legitimized through perceived expertise, debate fluency, leadership capacity, or policy mastery	Support relation	26	10.83	Evaluative markers such as “capable,” “clear,” “experienced,” and “ready”
Candidate evaluation	Credibility and integrity doubt	Candidate is challenged through suspicion, inconsistency, past record, or ethical concern	Attack relation	24	10.00	Evaluative markers such as “inconsistent,” “unclear,” “problematic,” and “untrustworthy”
Candidate evaluation	Leadership-style comparison	Candidates are contrasted through speaking style, emotional control, decisiveness, or public persona	Claim plus premise	20	8.33	Comparative markers such as “more firm,” “less clear,” “calmer,” or “more convincing”
Institutional legitimacy	Electoral fairness suspicion	Electoral process is questioned through claims of unfairness, fraud, elite intervention, or procedural distrust	Attack relation	18	7.50	References to “fraud,” “intervention,” “dynasty,” “unfairness,” and “KPU neutrality”
Institutional legitimacy	Debate procedure scrutiny	Debate format, moderator role, question design, or time allocation becomes an object of evaluation	Claim plus premise	12	5.00	References to “format,” “theme,” “question,” “moderator,” and “speaking time”
Institutional legitimacy	Trust in official electoral process	Official electoral procedure is defended through reference to rules, schedules, public access, or institutional transparency	Support relation	10	4.17	References to “official schedule,” “public debate,” “recapitulation,” and “rules”
Identity and moral boundary	Religious-nationalist positioning	Political preference is connected to moral, religious, nationalist, or ideological identity	Claim plus premise	18	7.50	References to “religion,” “nation,” “moral leadership,” and “national unity”
Identity and moral boundary	Youth and regional representation	Political legitimacy is linked to generational, regional, or representational claims	Support relation	12	5.00	References to “young voters,” “region,” “representation,” and “ordinary citizens”
Identity and moral boundary	Out-group moral labeling	Opponents are marked as dangerous, immoral, ignorant, anti-people, or anti-democratic	Attack relation	10	4.17	Boundary markers such as “anti-people,” “dangerous,” “divisive,” or “not democratic”
Platform and information order	Buzzer or coordinated narrative accusation	Public talk attributes political opinion to organized manipulation, paid influence, or artificial amplification	Attack relation	9	3.75	References to “buzzer,” “paid account,” “coordinated narrative,” and “propaganda”
Platform and information order	Misinformation correction	Text attempts to correct, verify, or contest circulating claims about candidates or electoral process	Claim plus premise	5	2.08	References to “hoax,” “check first,” “source,” “data,” and “official information”

The dominant pattern is the concentration of claim-plus-premise structures in policy-based reasoning, especially governance, law, rights, economy, and welfare. Textual markers such as "law," "rights," "corruption," "economy," "prices," "jobs," and "welfare" indicate that electoral talk often turns candidate preference into a justification about state performance and public livelihood. Candidate evaluation is also prominent, but it is more evenly divided between support and attack: competence and performance praise appear alongside credibility and integrity doubt. Institutional legitimacy contains a sharper antagonistic edge, especially through references to "fraud," "intervention," "dynasty," and "unfairness." Identity-related rows show moral boundary-making through religious, nationalist, generational, and out-group labels, while platform-related rows identify anxiety over buzzers and misinformation.

These findings position argumentation as the bridge between stance and polarization. A stance becomes politically meaningful when it is directed toward a target and justified through a recognizable argumentative structure; polarization becomes visible when those structures repeatedly separate competent from incompetent candidates, legitimate from illegitimate institutions, or moral citizens from dangerous opponents. This is why sentiment analysis alone is insufficient: negative language may indicate policy critique, institutional distrust, moral delegitimation, or correction of misinformation, each carrying different democratic implications. The distribution also aligns with recent work arguing that stance detection must be target-aware, socially contextual, and sensitive to conversational relations [11], [13], [14], [17]. Thus, this study treats polarization as an argumentative-discursive configuration, not merely an emotional score.

4.2. Target-aware stance patterns in Indonesian electoral conversations

Electoral stance in this corpus is not distributed evenly across political targets. The strongest concentration appears around candidate pair 02, which records the highest total frequency and a support-dominant pattern, while candidate pair 01 and candidate pair 03 show opposition-dominant patterns. Electoral institutions also attract a high level of opposition, indicating that political judgment is directed not only at candidates but also at procedures, neutrality, and legitimacy. This distinction matters because stance detection must identify both direction and target; without target specification, a negative expression may be misread as general dissatisfaction rather than opposition to a candidate, institution, or digital actor. This supports the argument that stance cannot be collapsed into sentiment polarity alone.

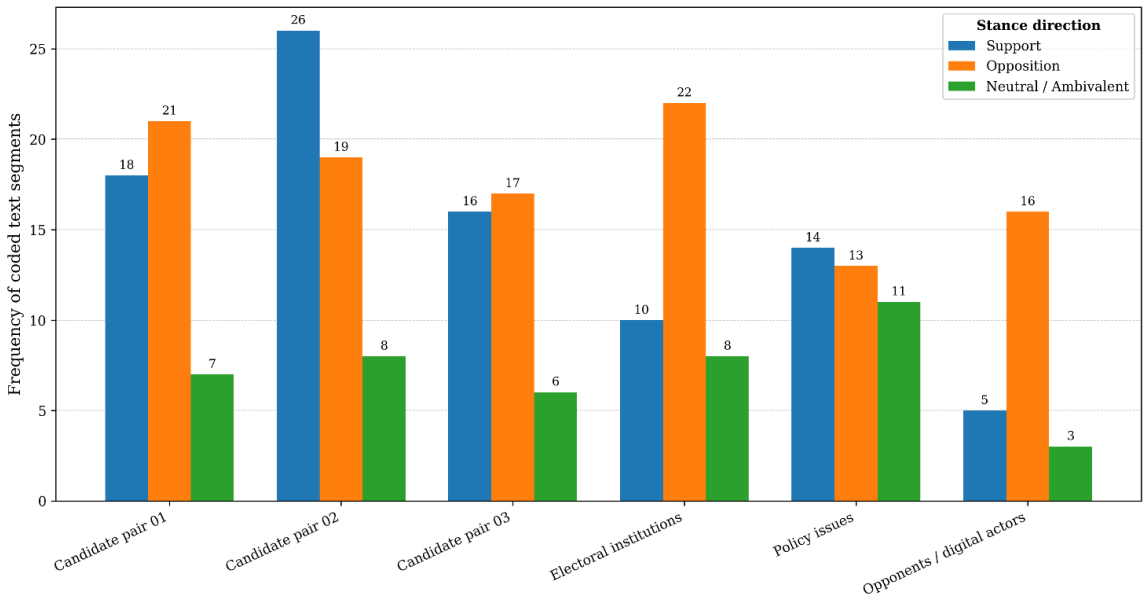

Figure 3. Target-aware stance distribution in Indonesian electoral conversations

Table 3. Target-aware stance distribution across electoral conversation segments

Stance Target	Target Type	Support	Opposition	Neutral / Ambivalent	Total Frequency	Percentage	Dominant Stance	Stance Intensity	Indicative Textual Evidence
Candidate pair 01	Candidate / leadership actor	18	21	7	46	19.17	Opposition	Medium–high	Candidate evaluation through competence, credibility, leadership style, and past-record markers
Candidate pair 02	Candidate / leadership actor	26	19	8	53	22.08	Support	Medium–high	Supportive markers connected to decisiveness, continuity, debate confidence, and governing experience
Candidate pair 03	Candidate / leadership actor	16	17	6	39	16.25	Opposition	Medium	Comparative judgment through policy clarity, emotional control, and perceived feasibility
Electoral institutions	Institutional actor	10	22	8	40	16.67	Opposition	High	References to procedural fairness, neutrality, vote counting, debate regulation, and institutional trust
Policy issues	Issue / programmatic object	14	13	11	38	15.83	Mixed	Medium	Issue talk around law, welfare, economy, security, corruption, public service, and democracy
Opponents / digital actors	Relational and platform actor	5	16	3	24	10.00	Opposition	High	Accusations involving buzzers, propaganda, misinformation, manipulation, and hostile supporter groups
Total	—	89	108	43	240	100.00	Opposition-oriented	—	—

The dominant pattern is opposition-oriented, with 108 segments coded as opposition, compared with 89 support segments and 43 neutral or ambivalent segments. Candidate-focused talk remains the largest cluster, but institutional and platform-oriented targets introduce a sharper antagonistic register. Textual evidence includes repeated markers of competence and credibility for candidates, procedural fairness and neutrality for electoral institutions, and accusations of "buzzer," "propaganda," "misinformation," and "manipulation" for digital actors. Policy issues show the most balanced distribution, with support, opposition, and ambivalence appearing in relatively close proportions. This indicates that issue-based talk is more interpretively open, while candidate, institution, and platform-related talk tends to produce clearer alignment or rejection.

A target-aware reading shows that polarization emerges through the relational organization of stance. Candidate support becomes politically consequential when paired with opposition to rival candidates, distrust toward institutions, or delegitimation of digital opponents. This confirms Bestvater and Monroe's distinction between sentiment and stance, because affective tone alone cannot determine whether a segment supports one target, rejects another, or expresses ambivalence toward an issue. It also aligns with recent stance-detection research emphasizing conversation threads, social context, and target specificity in political text [12], [14], [13], [17]. This study therefore treats stance as a relational signal through which electoral publics organize support, distrust, and antagonism.

4.3. Polarization markers in Indonesian electoral conversations

Polarization appears as a layered discursive pattern rather than a single emotional tendency. The largest mode is issue-based polarization, with 58 segments, followed by affective hostility with 52 segments, identity boundary-making with 48 segments, institutional distrust with 42 segments, and platform-mediated antagonism with 40 segments. This distribution shows that electoral division is not confined to interpersonal dislike or partisan hostility. It is also organized through disputes over law, democracy, economy, welfare, security, institutional fairness, and information manipulation. The table therefore extends previous coding layers by showing how argumentative roles and stance targets become polarized when they repeatedly construct political difference as conflict between values, groups, institutions, and competing realities.

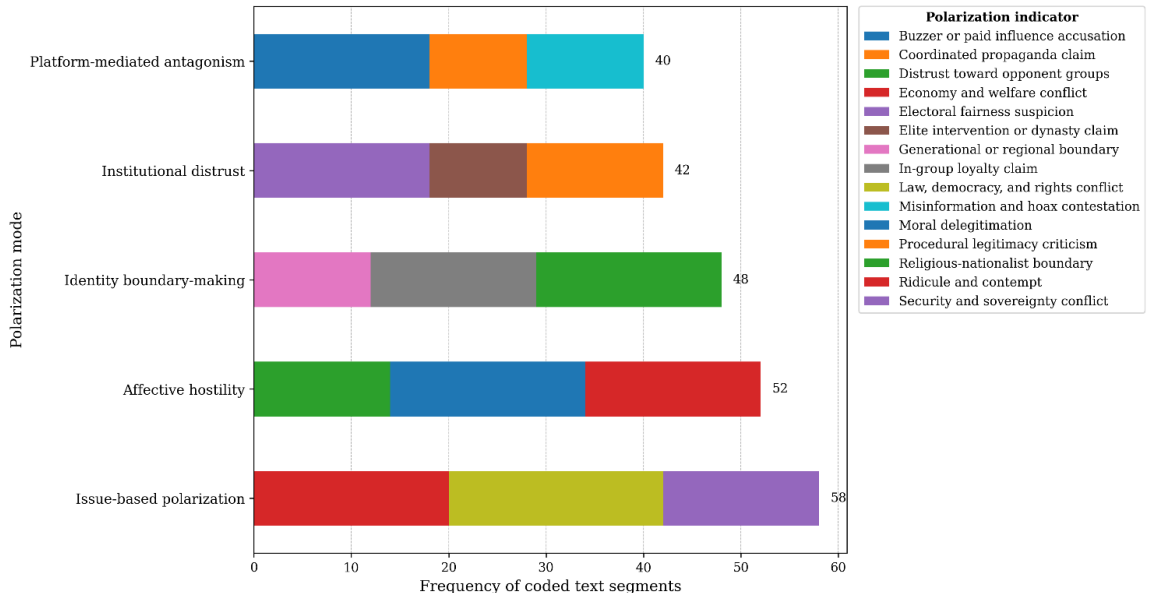

Figure 4. Polarization markers in Indonesian electoral conversations

Table 4. Polarization modes across coded electoral conversation segments

Polarization Mode	Indicator	Discursive Signal	Frequency	Percentage	Indicative Textual Evidence	Link to Previous Coding Layer
Affective hostility	Moral delegitimation	Opponent is framed as ethically unacceptable, dangerous, or anti-people	20	8.33	Markers such as “dangerous,” “anti-people,” “not democratic,” and “betrayal”	Mostly linked to opposition stance and attack relation
Affective hostility	Ridicule and contempt	Political target is mocked through sarcasm, insult, or dismissive comparison	18	7.50	Markers such as “clownish,” “empty talk,” “only performance,” and “cannot lead”	Linked to candidate evaluation and high-intensity opposition
Affective hostility	Distrust toward opponent groups	Supporters or rival groups are represented as irrational, manipulated, or morally suspect	14	5.83	Markers such as “blind supporter,” “paid crowd,” and “cannot think critically”	Linked to relational target coding
Identity boundary-making	Religious-nationalist boundary	Political legitimacy is attached to religious, nationalist, or ideological identity	19	7.92	Markers such as “religion,” “nation,” “unity,” and “moral leadership”	Linked to identity and moral boundary category
Identity boundary-making	In-group loyalty claim	Speaker marks political belonging through “we,” “our people,” or collective moral alignment	17	7.08	Markers such as “we choose,” “our struggle,” “people like us,” and “defend our future”	Linked to support stance and group alignment
Identity boundary-making	Generational or regional boundary	Electoral preference is justified through youth, region, locality, or representational status	12	5.00	Markers such as “young voters,” “regions,” “ordinary citizens,” and “outside Jakarta”	Linked to representation-based support
Issue-based polarization	Law, democracy, and rights conflict	Disagreement is organized around democratic procedure, rights, corruption, and state accountability	22	9.17	Markers such as “law,” “rights,” “corruption,” “democracy,” and “constitutional order”	Linked to policy-based reasoning
Issue-based polarization	Economy and welfare conflict	Political division is expressed through livelihood, welfare, prices, employment, and poverty claims	20	8.33	Markers such as “jobs,” “prices,” “poverty,” “subsidy,” and “public welfare”	Linked to policy-based reasoning
Issue-based polarization	Security and sovereignty conflict	Candidate difference is framed around defence, diplomacy, national security, and sovereignty	16	6.67	Markers such as “defence,” “sovereignty,” “security,” and “foreign pressure”	Linked to policy-based reasoning
Institutional distrust	Electoral fairness suspicion	Electoral process is questioned through suspicion of fraud, bias, or unfair competition	18	7.50	Markers such as “fraud,” “unfair,” “intervention,” and “neutrality problem”	Linked to institutional opposition
Institutional distrust	Procedural legitimacy criticism	Debate rules, counting procedures, or official communication are criticized as inadequate	14	5.83	Markers such as “format,” “rules,” “counting,” “recapitulation,” and “procedure”	Linked to debate-procedure scrutiny
Institutional distrust	Elite intervention or dynasty claim	Political competition is read through elite capture, political dynasty, or unequal access	10	4.17	Markers such as “dynasty,” “elite control,” “power inheritance,” and “state machinery”	Linked to institutional legitimacy attack
Platform-mediated antagonism	Buzzer or paid influence accusation	Online opinion is attributed to organized manipulation or paid amplification	18	7.50	Markers such as “buzzer,” “paid account,” “organized attack,” and “bot-like”	Linked to platform and information order
Platform-mediated antagonism	Misinformation and hoax contestation	Competing claims are framed as false, misleading, or needing verification	12	5.00	Markers such as “hoax,” “check source,” “fake narrative,” and “misleading”	Linked to misinformation correction
Platform-mediated antagonism	Coordinated propaganda claim	Political messaging is interpreted as synchronized, strategic, or artificially amplified	10	4.17	Markers such as “propaganda,” “coordinated,” “mass attack,” and “narrative operation”	Linked to attack relation and digital-actor opposition

The most visible pattern is the strength of issue-based polarization, especially around law, democracy, rights, economy, and welfare. Textual markers such as "law," "rights," "corruption," "jobs," "prices," "poverty," and "public welfare" indicate that disagreement is frequently attached to concrete policy and governance claims. Affective hostility appears through terms such as "dangerous," "anti-people," "empty talk," and "blind supporter," showing that disagreement also shifts into moral and emotional rejection. Institutional distrust is marked by "fraud," "unfair," "intervention," "neutrality problem," and "dynasty," while platform-mediated antagonism appears through "buzzer," "paid account," "hoax," "propaganda," and "coordinated." These markers demonstrate that polarization is distributed across issue, identity, institutional, and platform dimensions.

This pattern refines polarization theory by showing that Indonesian electoral polarization cannot be read only as partisan distance or online incivility. Issue-based conflict may still contain reasoned claims, while affective hostility and institutional distrust move political disagreement toward moral exclusion and democratic suspicion. This distinction is important because Dias and Lelkes [18] separate policy disagreement from partisan identity, while Kreiss and McGregor [19] warn against reducing polarization to platform effects alone. Indonesian studies on selective exposure, coordinated activity, misinformation, and fragmented publics also suggest that polarization is produced through multiple communicative mechanisms rather than a single cause [1], [2], [4], [6]. This study therefore conceptualizes polarization as a relational outcome of arguments, stances, and boundary-making.

5. DISCUSSION

The argument-structure findings matter because they show that Indonesian electoral conversations do not operate merely as expressive reactions to candidates, but as arenas where citizens attempt to justify, attack, defend, and contest political legitimacy. Policy-based reasoning, candidate evaluation, institutional legitimacy, identity boundary-making, and platform-information concerns each perform different democratic functions. Policy-based reasoning can support deliberation when citizens connect political preference to law, welfare, security, corruption, or governance. Candidate evaluation can also function productively when it assesses competence and public accountability. Yet these same argumentative forms become dysfunctional when attack relations shift from critique to delegitimation, suspicion, or moral exclusion. This finding extends argument-mining scholarship by showing that claims and premises are not only technical units to be extracted, but also civic practices through which publics negotiate political authority [22], [23], [24]. Thus, argument structure is central to understanding how electoral speech becomes democratically meaningful.

The underlying structure behind this argumentative pattern is likely the hybrid character of Indonesian electoral communication, where institutional debate, social media commentary, identity politics, and distrust of political elites intersect. Policy arguments dominate because official debates invite citizens to interpret candidates through governance, welfare, law, and security agendas. However, candidate evaluation and institutional legitimacy also remain prominent because electoral competition in Indonesia is shaped by concerns over leadership persona, campaign machinery, dynastic politics, and procedural fairness. This pattern is consistent with studies of Indonesian political discourse that emphasize debate performance, post-truth campaigning, identity manipulation, and campaign-industry influence [28], [41], [42], [5]. It also partly challenges purely technical approaches to argument mining, because argument components cannot be interpreted apart from electoral history and platform context. This study therefore suggests association, not causation, between political context and argumentative form.

The target-aware stance findings are significant because they demonstrate why sentiment analysis alone cannot adequately explain Indonesian electoral talk. Support, opposition, and ambivalence acquire meaning only when connected to specific targets: candidate pairs, institutions, policy issues, opponents, or digital actors. A negative utterance directed at electoral institutions is not equivalent to criticism of a candidate, and a supportive comment about one candidate may imply rejection of another. This relational structure confirms Bestvater and Monroe's [11] argument that sentiment is not stance, while also supporting recent work that emphasizes target, context, and social relation in political stance detection [12], [13], [14], [17]. Its implication is methodological as well as political: electoral discourse analysis must identify who or what is being evaluated before interpreting democratic meaning. Without target sensitivity, computational analysis risks flattening political alignment into mood.

The reason stance appears relational rather than simply evaluative lies in how Indonesian electoral publics organize political meaning through comparison, opposition, and institutional suspicion. Candidate-centered talk remains strong because elections personalize policy choice through leaders, debate performance, and perceived credibility. Yet institutional and platform-oriented opposition shows that electoral stance is also directed toward procedures, regulators, supporter groups, and digital infrastructures.

This structure is consistent with studies showing that social context, conversation threads, named entities, and platform relations improve stance interpretation [31], [32], [33]. Indonesian NLP studies on sentiment, code-mixing, named-entity recognition, and culturally grounded language understanding further indicate that stance detection in Indonesia must account for informal registers, multilingual cues, and sociolinguistic variation [8], [34], [35], [36]. The pattern therefore reflects a contextual association between political target complexity and stance ambiguity. Fawaid [45] frames language, media, and representation as a politics of who is positioned to speak and be heard, which resonates with the relational reading of stance developed here.

The polarization-mapping findings matter because they show that polarization is not reducible to hostility, although hostility is certainly present. Issue-based polarization demonstrates that disagreement may still be organized around substantive concerns such as law, democracy, rights, welfare, economy, security, and sovereignty. This can function as democratic contestation when competing publics argue over values and policy priorities. However, affective hostility, identity boundary-making, institutional distrust, and platform-mediated antagonism show how disagreement can become dysfunctional when opponents are morally rejected, institutions are presumed illegitimate, and digital actors are framed as manipulators. This nuance supports Dias and Lelkes's [18] distinction between policy disagreement and partisan identity, while also aligning with Indonesian studies of selective exposure, coordinated action, misinformation, and fragmented publics [1], [2], [4], [6]. Polarization, in this sense, is a communicative configuration rather than a single emotional condition.

The structure behind this polarization pattern is best understood as multi-layered rather than platform-determined. Digital media may intensify visibility, speed, and antagonistic circulation, but this study's findings do not support a simple claim that platforms alone cause polarization. Instead, polarization appears where issue conflict, affective boundary-making, institutional distrust, and suspicion of coordinated digital activity intersect. This interpretation is consistent with Kreiss and McGregor's [19] caution against platform reductionism and Lorenz-Spreen et al.'s [20] finding that evidence on digital media and democracy varies across contexts. Indonesian scholarship similarly shows that polarization is shaped by religious-nationalist cleavages, democratic decline, post-truth campaigning, local electoral governance, and media fragmentation [3], [38], [43], [44]. This study therefore argues that polarization should be analyzed through relationships among arguments, stance targets, and boundary markers, not as a direct effect of online expression alone. Abdullah et al. [46] examine visual representation in the 2024 Indonesian presidential campaign, which is a reminder that electoral meaning is also carried by images and not only by written talk.

6. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Indonesian electoral conversations are best understood as relational configurations of argument, stance, and polarization, not aggregated sentiment. The central lesson is that citizens do not merely express approval or anger; they construct claims, mobilize premises, target candidates and institutions, and draw boundaries around legitimate and illegitimate political actors. Its scientific contribution lies in renewing Indonesian electoral-discourse research through an integrated framework connecting argument mining, target-aware stance detection, and polarization mapping. This approach refines methodological variables, sharpens research questions, and offers a more precise account of how political disagreement becomes organized at scale.

This study remains limited by its dependence on publicly available electoral texts, official debate materials, transcript sources, and coded platform conversations, which restricts access to private deliberation, offline persuasion, demographic variation, and algorithmic exposure mechanisms. Its corpus-based design also supports interpretive and correlational claims, not causal explanation about whether platforms, campaigns, or institutions produce polarization. Future research should expand across regions, languages, platforms, and election cycles, while incorporating mixed methods such as interviews, network analysis, longitudinal tracking, and model-validation experiments. Further studies should also test whether Indonesian-language argument and stance models remain reliable across local languages, sarcasm, code-mixing, and culturally embedded political references.

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Hasanudin: conceptualization, methodology, formal analysis, writing – original draft, writing – review and editing.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

Author states no conflict of interest.

AI USE DECLARATION

The author used artificial intelligence tools to assist with the generation of illustrative figures and with the formatting and layout of this manuscript. AI was not used to generate the substantive content, conceptualization, data, analysis, or conclusions of the research, all of which remain the sole responsibility of the author.

INFORMED CONSENT

Not applicable – this study did not involve direct human participants. Data consisted solely of publicly accessible, dateable, and verifiable digital text and audiovisual materials.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

This research did not involve human or animal subjects; it analyzed publicly accessible debate videos, transcripts, and institutional documents, and therefore no institutional review board approval was required. Where research does involve human subjects, the author affirms that such research would be conducted in full compliance with all relevant national regulations and institutional policies, in accordance with the tenets of the Declaration of Helsinki, and would be approved by the author's institutional review board or equivalent committee.

DATA AVAILABILITY

The corpus of publicly accessible debate videos, transcripts, institutional documents, and scholarly materials analyzed in this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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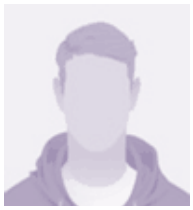

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