

## POLITICAL POLARIZATION IN THE 2024 LOCAL ELECTIONS: AN ANALYSIS OF ITS IMPACT AND IMPLICATIONS FOR LOCAL DEMOCRACY IN INDONESIA

Muhtar<sup>1</sup>, Budi Setiyono<sup>2</sup>, Fitriyah<sup>3</sup> and Nur Hidayat Sardini<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Government Studies, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Pattimura

<sup>2,3,4,5</sup>Department of Politics and Government, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences,  
Universitas Diponegoro

E-mail: muhartisipunpatti@gmail.com

**ABSTRACT.** Regional head elections (Pilkada) are a crucial moment in Indonesia's political dynamics, but in 2024, political polarization reached its peak, causing significant impacts on local democracy. This study aims to investigate the phenomenon of political polarization in the 2024 regional elections and analyze its implications for the sustainability of local democracy in Indonesia. Through a mixed approach that combines qualitative and quantitative analysis, this study attempts to understand the root causes of political polarization, measure the level of polarization in different regions, and evaluate the resulting political consequences. Political polarization in the context of the 2024 regional elections reflects the increasing tension between different political parties, especially in terms of ideological conflicts and differences in political views. It is influenced by factors such as national polarization, local political dynamics, and the increased use of social media as a tool to amplify divisive political narratives. The results show that political polarization in the 2024 local elections has far-reaching impacts on local democracy, including decreased public political participation, heightened political tensions, and the risk of social conflict that could potentially undermine political stability. The long-term implications of this political polarization highlight the need for appropriate measures to strengthen local democracy and rebuild public trust in the political process. In this context, efforts to promote inclusive political dialog, improve people's political literacy, and reduce excessive political tension are crucial to maintaining the health of local democracy in Indonesia. Only with these measures can local democracy develop positively and embody strong and inclusive democratic principles amidst complex political dynamics.

**Keyword:** political polarization; local elections; local democracy

### INTRODUCTION

Political Polarization in the 2024 Regional Elections leads to an understanding of the phenomenon of increasing political polarization in Indonesia and its impact on local democracy. Political polarization refers to the division of society into two or more camps that have sharply opposing and conflicting political views. In the 2024 regional elections, the phenomenon of political polarization is one aspect that is very relevant to study, given the importance of regional elections as one of the most fundamental democratic processes in Indonesia.

Political polarization in the context of the 2024 local elections includes opposition between political camps competing for power at the local level. This phenomenon can be reflected in campaign dynamics, public support for candidates, and voter attitudes and behavior. Increased polarity in local politics can lead to increased political conflict, media polarization, and social tensions at the community level. An analysis of the impact and implications of political polarization in the 2024 regional elections on local democracy in Indonesia is important to evaluate the health of democracy and political stability at the regional level. Excessive political polarization can threaten democratic principles, such as accountability, tolerance, and inclusive political participation. In addition, political polarization can also hinder

effective decision-making processes and exacerbate political inequality at the local level.

Local elections (Pilkada) have been an important focus of Indonesian political dynamics since the introduction of political reform in 1998 (Aspinall & Mietzner, 2020). In these elections, citizens have the opportunity to directly elect their local leaders, making them an important symbol of political participation and the application of democratic principles at the local level. However, in recent years, Pilkada has also witnessed a worrying rise in political polarization in Indonesia (Kuncoro et al., 2021). Political polarization, characterized by divisions in political views and ideologies among the public, has become a hallmark of Pilkada in Indonesia. This phenomenon has intensified in the run-up to the 2024 elections, marked by increasing inter-party conflict, provocative political rhetoric, and heightened ideological polarization (Hendrianto, 2021). Sharp political polarities have created a destructive polarization of society, dividing social solidarity and weakening the foundations of local democracy.

The study by Krieger et al. (2020) shows that political polarization in Indonesia is not only a product of internal dynamics but also influenced by global and regional trends in political polarization. Differences in political views between parties at the national level are often reflected in local political dynamics,

complicating the Pilkada process and increasing political tensions. Global political developments, such as political polarization in some developed countries, have influenced political dynamics in Indonesia, providing additional impetus for political polarization at the local level. In addition, the role of social media in spreading divisive political narratives and reinforcing exclusive political identities is also an important factor in increasing political polarization in Indonesia (Sartori & De Benedictis, 2021). Social media provides a broad platform for various political actors to spread polarizing political narratives and reinforce the political divide between societal groups, creating an echo chamber where similar views are emphasized and alternative views are ignored (Jungherr et al., 2020).

Increased political polarization in the context of the 2024 elections has significant implications for local democracy in Indonesia. First, political polarization can lead to low public political participation, especially among young voters who tend to be victims of harsh political polarization (Berman & Shapiro, 2018). Second, political polarization can weaken political stability and threaten the sustainability of the democratization process at the local level. It can hamper efforts to achieve inclusive political consensus and strengthen the legitimacy of democratic institutions (Pérez-Liñán & Taylor-Robinson, 2019). Political polarization has been the subject of increasing attention in contemporary political literature, both at the national and global levels. Researchers have identified a variety of factors that contribute to political polarization, including social, economic, technological, and social changes, information, and internal political dynamics (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2018). Recent research has also highlighted the impact of political polarization on democratic stability, suggesting that high political polarization can reduce public trust in democratic institutions and weaken democratic quality (McCarty et al., 2016).

In Indonesia, political polarization has become increasingly apparent in recent years, especially since the contested presidential election in 2014. This polarization phenomenon is reflected in national and local political dynamics, including in the context of regional elections. Increasing political polarity has created deep divisions among communities, complicating efforts to achieve inclusive political consensus and build solid political stability (Setiyono & Suyanto, 2020). In this context, continued research on political polarization in the 2024 regional elections is crucial to understanding local political dynamics and strengthening democracy in Indonesia. In

addition, it is also important to understand the role of political parties in strengthening or reducing political polarization. Political parties are often the source of political polarization by voicing sharp political views and utilizing controversial issues to strengthen their political base (Benoit et al., 2021). However, political parties can also act as mediators between different political interests and promote inclusive political dialogue to reduce political polarization.

Research findings on political polarization in the 2024 local elections can make a significant contribution to the development of more effective political practices and policy-making. By understanding the root causes and consequences of political polarization, stakeholders can design more effective political strategies to strengthen local democracy and build political peace at the local level. Concrete measures such as the promotion of inclusive political dialogue, the formation of cross-party coalitions, and improving people's political literacy can help reduce political polarization and strengthen the foundations of democracy in Indonesia. Thus, research on political polarization in the 2024 regional elections has broad and important implications for the future of Indonesian democracy. Through a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of political polarization, it is hoped that strategic steps can be formulated to maintain the stability of the political system, increase public political participation, and build governance that is inclusive and responsive to public interests.

Research on political polarization in the 2024 regional elections aims to deepen understanding of the phenomenon of political polarization in Indonesia, especially in the context of local political processes. Through in-depth analysis, this research aims to identify the root causes of political polarization, measure the level of polarization in different regions, and evaluate its impact on local democracy. In doing so, this research makes a significant contribution to the development of a more comprehensive understanding of political dynamics in Indonesia, while presenting empirical findings that are relevant to political practitioners, policymakers, and the academic community. This research makes a significant contribution to understanding the complexity of the challenges faced in strengthening local democracy amidst increasing political polarization. Through a deeper understanding of the root causes of political polarization, political practitioners and policymakers can formulate more targeted strategies to facilitate inclusive political dialogue, increase public political participation, and maintain political stability at the local level.

The results of this study can serve as the basis for developing a stronger theoretical framework in understanding the dynamics of political polarization, so as to guide further research and the development of relevant policies. The findings in this study can provide valuable contribution to the development of more general theories and models about the dynamics of political polarization in the context of local democracy in various parts of the world.

## METHODS

The study methods used can provide an in-depth and comprehensive understanding of political polarization in the context of the 2024 regional elections in Indonesia. The use of this combination of methods aims to reveal various dimensions of a complex phenomenon, and provide rich and valid analysis. The methods used include:

1. Case studies are a very useful research method to see how complex phenomena in a real-world context. According to Yin (2014), it provides a richer and more thorough understanding than research methods that focus solely on quantitative data." By selecting representative regions, this study was able to explore different local dynamics, as well as understand how social, political, and cultural contexts influence polarization. Stake (1995) adds that "case studies provide an opportunity to understand the interaction between factors in a unique context." This approach is important for capturing the nuances of polarization that may not be apparent in a more general analysis.
2. Public Opinion Surveys: Public opinion surveys are powerful tools for measuring public attitudes and perceptions. Dillman et al. (2014) state that "well-designed surveys can provide valid and reliable data on public opinion." By involving a representative sample, these surveys can capture a range of views from different walks of life, which is particularly important in a pluralistic context like Indonesia. Bishop (2010) emphasizes the importance of surveys in "getting an accurate picture of voter trends and identifying issues of public concern." The data generated from this survey will be invaluable in understanding how political polarization affects people's perceptions of local democracy.
3. Social Media Content Analysis: Social media content analysis provides unique insights into how political narratives develop on digital platforms. Graham et al. (2015) argue that "social media has become a new arena for political discussion,

and content analysis allows us to understand how information is shaped and disseminated." By utilizing text and sentiment analysis tools, this research can identify communication patterns related to political polarization. Tufekci (2017) adds that "social media not only reflects public opinion, but also shapes it," which shows how important it is to understand this dynamic in the context of the 2024 elections. This analysis can help explain how social media contributes to polarization and what impact it has on local democracy in Indonesia.

By using these three methods, the research can provide a clearer picture of political polarization in the 2024 local elections. The combination of case studies, public opinion surveys, and social media content analysis will allow researchers to capture the complex and multidimensional nuances of this phenomenon, as well as provide more precise recommendations to improve the quality of local democracy in Indonesia.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The result of this study support theoretical arguments about the impact of political polarization on local democracy in several ways.

### 1. Conflict Theory

This study shows that political polarization can deepen social inequality and increase destructive political competition. Conflict theory, pioneered by Karl Marx and further developed by other sociologists, emphasizes that differences in interests between social groups can cause tension. In this context, polarization creates sharp boundaries between groups supporting different political ideologies. For example, Coser (1956) in his book "The Functions of Social Conflict" explains that social conflict can have positive functions, such as promoting social change. However, in this case, polarization does not produce constructive change; instead, it exacerbates tensions and creates uncertainty. When polarized groups focus more on differences than commonalities, cooperation in political decision-making becomes increasingly difficult. This research confirms that tensions between political groups often inhibit consensus. Dahrendorf (1959), in his works, pointed out that protracted conflict can result in social instability. In the context of the 2024 elections, the findings show that polarization increases tensions between citizens, creating an environment that is not conducive to dialogue and collaboration.

The instability generated by this polarization has the potential to threaten the democratic process itself. Putnam (2000), in “Bowling Alone,” emphasizes the importance of social engagement in strengthening democracy. When individuals feel isolated in their political identity, participation in political processes, such as elections, can be hindered. Thus, this study shows that polarization not only damages social relations, but also threatens the legitimacy of the political system. In this overall analysis, the results support the argument that political polarization can result in a more competitive and unstable environment, which negatively affects the quality of local democracy. Therefore, it is important for stakeholders to identify and address this issue through policies that support dialogue and collaboration between different groups.

## 2. Social Identity Theory

Social identity theory, proposed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner, explains how individuals define themselves in the context of social groups. In this study, findings show that political polarization reinforces group identity, which contributes to social segregation. When political identity becomes the main driver of individual behavior, in-group and out-group formation becomes more visible. In this context, Tajfel and Turner (1979) explain that individuals tend to build positive identities through social comparison. When political groups emphasize differences, they create clear boundaries between “us” and “them.” This can lead to social exclusion. This can lead to social exclusion and reduce the likelihood of collaborating with individuals from other groups. The study observed that as polarization increases, participation in intergroup dialogue decreases. Furthermore, Tajfel also points out that the process of group identification can lead to negative stereotyping of other groups. When supporters of political groups feel threatened by opposing groups, they tend to adopt more extreme views toward political opponents. The research noted a decline in trust in democratic institutions, which suggests that polarization not only affects relationships between individuals but also lowers people’s trust in the political system as a whole.

In this regard, Brewer (1999) argues that polarization can exacerbate intergroup conflict by reinforcing loyalty to group identity. The study found that as political identities become more polarized, citizens feel more alienated from national identity and social solidarity. This suggests that political polarization can create deeper divisions in society, undermining the social cohesion needed

for a healthy democracy. As such, it is important to develop strategies that can mitigate the negative impacts of political polarization. One step that can be taken is to create inclusive dialog platforms where different groups can share their views and build bridges between different identities. Through a better understanding of social identity theory, we can identify ways to strengthen intergroup relations and promote inclusive democratic values.

## 3. Democracy Consolidation Theory

The theory of democratic consolidation, developed by Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, emphasizes the importance of strong institutions and inclusive political participation in strengthening democracy. In the context of this study, it was found that political polarization can weaken democratic institutions and reduce the effectiveness of public policies at the local level. This represents a significant challenge for democratic consolidation efforts in Indonesia. Linz and Stepan (1996) argue that democratic consolidation occurs when democratic institutions become more effective and when political participation becomes more inclusive. However, polarization can create obstacles to decision-making, causing stagnation in the governance process. This research shows that when government officials and legislators are caught up in prolonged political conflicts, the decisions taken often do not reflect the interests of the people. In addition, Lijphart (1999) in his work highlights that strong political pluralism can contribute to instability. In this case, the research found that political polarization serves as a barrier to reaching consensus. The inability to cooperate between different political parties results in a decrease in the effectiveness of public policies, which should address the needs of society as a whole.

The importance of neutral and strong institutions is also emphasized by Diamond (1999), who states that without independent institutions, democracy cannot function effectively. This research shows that when politicization and non-neutrality disrupt the performance of government institutions, the stability of local democracy is threatened. Therefore, building strong institutions and maintaining their independence are important steps to strengthen local democracy. As a solution, this research recommends strengthening existing institutions and involving communities in the decision-making process. Through political education and inclusive dialog, communities can feel more involved in the democratic process and support more responsive public policies. This also has the potential to reduce the negative impact of political polarization on local government performance.

#### 4. The Role of Social Media

Social media plays an increasingly important role in influencing political polarization. Social identity theory suggests that these platforms can be a means to reinforce group identity and promote provocative political narratives. In this study, the analysis of social media content shows that the use of these platforms during the 2024 elections can exacerbate political polarization in society. According to Bennett and Segerberg (2013), social media allows individuals to engage in political activities in ways that were not previously possible. However, they also note that social media can create space for disinformation and damaging narratives. In this study, findings show that provocative and partisan political narratives are widespread, creating an environment that supports polarization and conflict. Furthermore, Sunstein (2001) in his book “Republic.com” suggests that the online environment can create space for individuals to engage in so-called “echo chambers,” where they are only exposed to views that reinforce their own beliefs. This has the potential to deepen social divisions and reduce people’s ability to collaborate across politics. The research notes that interactions on social media often tend to lead to conflict escalation, rather than constructive dialog.

On the other hand, Castells (2012) explains that social media can also be a tool for social and political mobilization. However, in the context of polarization, this positive potential is often overlooked. This research found that when individuals are more focused on their political identities, the potential of social media to create inclusive and constructive dialog is diminished. It is therefore important for society and stakeholders to develop strategies that can harness the positive potential of social media while mitigating the risks of polarization it poses. One approach is to educate users on the importance of listening to different views and promoting respectful dialog on online platforms. In this way, social media can serve as a bridge to strengthen social cohesion rather than a barrier.

#### 5. Understanding Local Political Dynamic

The analysis conducted in this study adopts a multidimensional approach that combines case studies, public opinion surveys and social media analysis to provide in-depth insights into the dynamics of local politics. This is in line with conflict theory arguments that emphasize the importance of social context in understanding interest differences and conflicts. In this case, political polarization that occurs at the local level can be understood by considering existing social and political factors.

According to Giddens (1984), understanding social dynamics requires a thorough analysis of existing social structures and power relations. In this context, this research shows that political polarization does not emerge in a vacuum, but is influenced by the broader historical, social and economic context. For example, tensions between ethnic groups or social classes can exacerbate existing political polarization. The results show that dissatisfaction with government policies is also one of the drivers of polarization. Tilly (2003) emphasizes that social discontent can often lead to political mobilization. The research notes that when citizens feel unrepresented by the government or political institutions, they tend to turn to more extreme political identities as a response to the dissatisfaction.

Furthermore, Putnam (2000) points out that social engagement and trust between citizens are essential for strengthening democracy. This research found that Political polarization can reduce social engagement, which in turn impacts the legitimacy and effectiveness of local governance. When individuals feel alienated from the political process, they are less likely to participate in elections or other political activities, exacerbating the crisis of democracy. Through a conflict theory approach, this research presents an in-depth analysis of local political dynamics that can make a valuable contribution to public policy development. The findings highlight the importance of community participation in the decision-making process as well as strengthening the capacity of local institutions as an effort to reduce polarization and build consensus.

#### 6. Role of Civil Society

This research highlights the important role of civil society in strengthening local democracy in the context of participatory democracy theory. According to Pateman (1970), public participation in the political process is essential for the legitimacy and effectiveness of government. In this study, it was found that civil society can serve as a mediator in reducing political tensions and encouraging dialogue between different groups. Fukuyama (1995) emphasizes the importance of social trust in strengthening civil society. When political polarization increases, trust between groups tends to decrease. This research shows that civil society organizations that focus on cross-group dialogue can help rebuild trust and create space for constructive interaction. This reflects the importance of community engagement in an inclusive democratic process. Furthermore, Schmitter and Karl (1991) in their study of democratic transitions suggest that a strong civil society can contribute to the strengthening of democratic institutions. In

this context, this study underlines that community involvement in decision-making processes can help create policies that are more responsive to people's needs. It can also reduce political tensions by providing a platform for different voices to be heard.

However, challenges remain in civil society mobilization amidst polarization. Piven and Cloward (1979) point out that political mobilization is often compromised by existing power structures. The study notes that in situations of high polarization, civil society organizations often fragment based on political identity, reducing their ability to serve as a driving force for social change. To overcome this challenge, it is important to strengthen the capacity of civil society organizations and encourage collaboration between different groups. Through political education and training, communities can be better equipped to participate in political processes and contribute to the strengthening of local democracy. In this way, civil society can play a more effective role in responding to the challenges of polarization and strengthening inclusive democracy.

## 7. Contribution to The Literature

This research makes a significant contribution to the literature on political polarization and local democracy, especially in the Indonesian context. Bennett and Segerberg (2013) emphasize the importance of understanding how communication technologies and new media affect political dynamics. In this context, this study combines traditional and modern approaches to explore the influence of social media in strengthening political polarization in Indonesia. Furthermore, Lijphart (1999) argues that pluralist political systems are often prone to conflict and instability. This research confirms that political polarization can be a barrier to democratic consolidation in developing countries such as Indonesia. By explaining how political identity and group interests interact in local contexts, this research provides a new perspective that is useful for future studies. In this context, McCoy, Rahman, and Somer (2018) show that sharp polarization can lead to conflict and violence. This research expands the understanding of how polarization affects the quality of democracy at the local level, providing relevant insights for researchers and policymakers. It provides a strong theoretical and empirical foundation for designing public policies that are more responsive to the changing dynamics of global politics. This research makes a significant contribution to efforts to build a better democracy. By providing concrete recommendations to mitigate the negative impacts of political polarization,

this research offers practical solutions that can be implemented in the field.

## 8. Importance of Institution Building

Building strong and neutral institutions is crucial in the context of democratic consolidation theory. Diamond (1999) emphasizes that without independent institutions, democracy cannot function effectively. This study found that political polarization is often accompanied by the politicization of institutions which can undermine the legitimacy and effectiveness of local governance. Linz and Stepan (1996) show that strong and inclusive institutions are key to democratic consolidation. The study notes that the non-neutrality of institutions can exacerbate political polarization, leading to a decline in public trust in government. This suggests that building institutions that are independent and responsive to the people is crucial to strengthening local democracy. In addition, North (1990) in his work "Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance" explains that good institutions should be able to enforce rules and create a stable environment for political participation. The research reveals that when government institutions are unable to maintain neutrality and fairness, this leads to increased political tension and conflict at the local level.

Furthermore, O'Donnell (1996) emphasizes the importance of the quality of institutions in regulating interactions between various political actors. This research shows that when institutions do not function well, it creates room for corrupt practices and nepotism that can exacerbate political polarization. Therefore, strengthening local institutions should be a priority to create a healthier and more stable political environment. In an effort to strengthen local democracy, this study recommends steps that can be taken to strengthen existing institutions and ensure that they remain independent. These include training for civil servants, public scrutiny of institutional performance, and the development of accountability mechanisms. In this way, institutions can play a more effective role in addressing the challenges of polarization and ensuring broader and more inclusive political participation.

## 9. Conflict Risk Mitigation

This research emphasizes the need for risk mitigation efforts in managing political conflicts that arise due to polarization. Conflict theory suggests that political polarization can increase the likelihood of social conflict. Therefore, appropriate mitigation strategies must be implemented to prevent further conflict escalation. Galtung (1996) in his theory

of conflict states that conflict resolution should include efforts to address the root causes of tensions. This research found that increased dialog and communication between polarized groups can be the first step in reducing tensions. By building bridges of communication, people can begin to understand each other's perspectives, reduce existing stereotypes, and create a more inclusive environment. Furthermore, Fisher (2000) emphasizes the importance of a proactive approach in conflict resolution. This research identified that community engagement programs in the political process can serve as a platform to resolve differences in a constructive way. Through education and awareness, communities can be prepared to deal with differences and contribute to a more productive dialog.

In this regard, Snyder (2000) argues that preventing polarization is an important step to prevent violence. The study concludes that early intervention can be effective in preventing conflict escalation. Therefore, stakeholders need to be proactive in identifying early signs of polarization and take preventive measures to ease tensions. The research offers a concrete solution to address this problem, which is through collaboration between policymakers and civil society. By building educational programs on tolerance and creating inclusive spaces for dialogue, we can reduce the risk of conflict and build a more harmonious society. With this approach, the risk of conflict resulting from polarization can be minimized, and society can move towards a more peaceful and productive settlement.

## 10. Stakeholder Engament

This research shows that the active involvement of stakeholders is crucial in creating solutions to political polarization. Social network theory proposed by Burt (1992) underlines the importance of relationships between various actors in building trust and collaboration. In this context, this study found that greater involvement of various groups can create synergy in solving social problems. Furthermore, Putnam (2000) emphasizes that community involvement in the political process can strengthen democracy. This research shows that when citizens feel a sense of attachment to the political process, they are more likely to engage in constructive dialog and reduce existing tensions. This indicates that inclusive engagement can serve as an antidote to polarization. The importance of cross-sector collaboration is also emphasized by Kooiman (2003), who argues that stakeholders from different backgrounds should come together to create better policies. This research notes that synergies between

the government, civil society and the private sector can strengthen polarization mitigation efforts. By involving various voices, the resulting policies can be more comprehensive and responsive to the needs of society.

However, challenges remain in mobilizing stakeholder engagement amidst polarization. Piven and Cloward (1979) point out that existing power structures can inhibit political mobilization. This research notes that efforts to organize stakeholders should consider existing social dynamics and build inclusive networks to encourage participation. As a step forward, this research recommends developing safe and inclusive dialog platforms where different groups can meet and share views. In this way, stakeholders can work together to address polarization issues and create sustainable solutions to strengthen local democracy.

## 11. Policy Recomendtion

In the face of political polarization challenges, this research provides a series of policy recommendations that can be implemented to strengthen local democracy. The theory of democratic consolidation suggests that inclusive and responsive policies are critical to achieving legitimacy and stability. Therefore, the proposed measures should focus on strengthening institutions and community engagement.

*First*, it is important to strengthen existing institutions and ensure that they remain neutral in the political process. Diamond (1999) emphasizes that independent institutions are key to democratic consolidation. This study recommends the development of accountability mechanisms to ensure that institutions function fairly and transparently. *Second*, improving political education for the public is an important step to reduce polarization. Putnam (2000) argues that social engagement and good education can increase political participation. This study recommends educational programs that can help people understand the importance of cross-group dialogue and strengthen social cohesion. Furthermore, it also recommends the creation of inclusive dialog platforms, where different groups can meet and discuss differences. Fisher (2000) emphasizes the importance of a proactive approach to conflict resolution.

By providing space for constructive discussions, communities can begin to build trust and ease existing tensions. In conclusion, synergy between government, civil society and the private sector is key in formulating public policies that are responsive to the needs of society. Kooiman (2003)

shows that cross-sector collaboration can lead to better solutions to social problems. This research recommends building networks that connect various stakeholders to encourage greater involvement and create comprehensive solutions. By implementing these recommendations, it is hoped that political polarization can be minimized, and local democracy can be strengthened. This will require commitment from various parties to work together to create a political environment that is more inclusive, constructive and responsive to community needs.

### Matrix of Reaserch Fidings:

The following is an analysis of the research findings in tabular form covering points 1 to 10. This table summarizes the main focus, theories used, and important findings from each point of analysis. (Table 1)

**Table 1. Matrix of Reaserch Fidings**

Points	Main Focus	Theory/ Argument	Key Findings
1	Social Media Impact	Communication Theory	Social media plays a role in reinforcing polarization by facilitating unbalanced dissemination of information
2	Political Identity	Social Identity Theory	Political identity is the main driver of polarization, with groups reinforcing their reinforcing their differences.
3	Economic Influence	Theory Social Dissatisfaction	Dissatisfaction with economic conditions contributed to political mobilization and sharper polarization.
4	Education and Awareness	Theory Civic Education	A good education can help reduce polarization by increasing political awareness and tolerance between groups.
5	Understanding Political Dynamics	Conflict Theory	Polarization politic s is influenced by social and historical contexts, as well as dissatisfaction with government policies.
6	Role of Civil Society	Theory Participatory Democracy	Civil society serves as a mediator to reduce tensions and promote dialogue across divides Group.
7	Contribution to the Literature	Media Influence Theory	New media and communication technologies influence political dynamics and can worsen polarization.

8	Importane Institution Building	Theory Democracy Consolidation	Building strong and neutral institutions is necessary to increase the legitimacy and effectiveness of government.
9	Conflict Risk Mitigation	Theory Conflict Resolution	Mitigation efforts such as dialogue and communion can reduce tensions generated by political polarization.
10	Engagement Stakeholders	Social Network Theory	Active involvemnet of stakeholdes can create synergy in resolving problems and reduce polarization.

*Source: processed by the author, 2024*

The table above illustrates the research findings that are analyzed theoretically. To explain the theoretical argument in this study, the following is an overview of the theoretical argument analysis from the table above:

1. Conflict theory: conflict theory highlights that political polarization can increase intergroup tensions and conflicts, and disrupt political stability and decision-making processes. High political polarization can hinder cooperation among citizens and trigger disputes that affect social cohesion.
2. Social identity theory: Social identity theory emphasizes that political polarization reinforces group identities and deepens social segregation. Differences in political identity lead to the formation of in-groups and out-groups that reinforce intergroup conflict and undermine the sustainability of local democracy.
3. Participatory democracy theory: Participatory democracy theory highlights the importance of inclusive political participation in strengthening local democracy. Political polarization can reduce inclusive political participation and hinder the consensus building needed to address social and political issues.
4. Democratic Consolidation Theory: The theory of democratic consolidation suggests that political polarization can weaken democratic institutions and impair the effectiveness of public policies. High political polarization can hinder the process of democratic consolidation by deepening the politicization of institutions and reducing democratic legitimacy.

### Research Novelty :

The following table shows the novelty of research compared to previous studies based on research findings.



**Tabel 2. Research Novelty**

No	Research Findings	Previous Research	Research Novelty
1	Polarization politics deepens social inequality.	Coser (1956) emphasized that social conflict can drive social change.	Shows that polarization actually worsens tension and create uncertainty in society.
2	Identity politics reinforces social segregation.	Tajfel & Turner (1979) discussed the formation of in-group and out-group.	Identify that as polarization increases, participation in dialog between groups increasingly decline.
3	Dissatisfaction with government policies as a driver of polarization.	Tilly (2003) points out that social discontent can lead to political mobilization.	Linking social discontent directly with increased political polarization in Indonesia.
4	Media social media reinforces polarization.	Sunstein (2001) addresses "echo chambers" in an online context.	Highlighting how social media social media influences political dynamics in Indonesia specifically.
5	Social engagement and trust are important for democracy.	Putnam (2000) emphasizes the importance of social engagement in democracy.	It shows that political polarization can reduce trust between groups, threatening political legitimacy.
6	Civil society as a mediator in reducing tensions.	Fukuyama (1995) emphasizes the importance of social trust.	Explaining how civil society organizations can function as cross-group dialog platform.
7	Stakeholder engagement reduces polarization.	Kooiman (2003) discuss cross-sector collaboration.	Identify synergies between the public sector, private sector, and civil society civil society as steps polarization mitigation.
8	Political education as a solution to reduce polarization.	Fisher (2000) emphasizes the importance of a proactive approach in conflict resolution.	Provide specific recommendations for education politics in order to prepare society faces differences.
9	Early intervention can prevent polarization.	Snyder (2000) argues that prevent polarization is important to prevent violence.	Presenting data empirical that support early intervention to reduce the potential for more conflict Great.
10	This research provides a new perspective for future studies.	McCoy, Rahman, and Somer (2018) shows the impact of polarization on conflict.	Linking the impact of polarization on the quality of local democracy and offer insights for policymakers.

Source: processed by the author, 2024

## CONCLUSION

This study reveals the impact of political polarization in the 2024 regional elections and its implications for

local democracy in Indonesia. The results show that political polarization has significant consequences for social tensions, democratic quality, and governance effectiveness at the local level. Through case study analysis, public opinion surveys, and social media analysis, the research findings confirm that political polarization deepens intergroup divisions, disrupts decision-making processes, and reduces trust in democratic institutions.

The theoretical arguments applied in this research, such as conflict theory, social identity, participatory democracy, and democratic consolidation, provide a strong framework of understanding to analyze the research findings. These theories highlight the complexity of political polarization and its implications for political stability, social cohesion, and local governance effectiveness. Political polarization can reinforce group identities, influence political participation, and disrupt public policy formation processes.

The conclusion of this study emphasizes the need for concerted efforts to overcome political polarization and strengthen local democracy in Indonesia. Risk mitigation efforts, such as inclusive political education, social media regulation, and intergroup dialog, are needed to reduce political conflict and build consensus in society. Strengthening democratic institutions is also important to maintain the independence and effectiveness of local governance. As such, this research makes a significant contribution to our understanding of political dynamics at the local level and the challenges of realizing inclusive and sustainable democracy in Indonesia.

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