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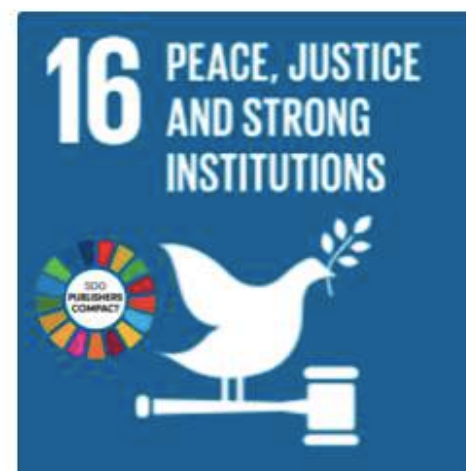
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STRENGTHENING INSTITUTIONAL INTEGRITY FOR SDG: THE INFLUENCE OF MEDIA OWNERSHIP ON ELECTION REPORTING IN INDONESIA'S 2024 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The 2024 Indonesian General Election witnessed significant media coverage, with media outlets owned by politically affiliated entrepreneurs playing a prominent role. This study investigates the objectivity and bias in election reporting by television and online media platforms—specifically iNews TV, Okezone.com, Metro TV, and metrotvnews.com—owned by individuals with political affiliations. The analysis period spans from the start of the campaign on November 28, 2023, to election day on February 14, 2024.

Theoretical Framework: Building upon prior research indicating media bias associated with political ownership and its impact on news coverage, this study employs the political economy of media theory and the hierarchy of influences model to examine media content.

Method: The research utilizes Media Content Analysis (MCA) and a case study approach, integrating quantitative and qualitative methods. The mixed-method approach provides a more comprehensive analysis of media dynamics. The quantitative approach focuses on objective measurement and statistical analysis, while the qualitative approach emphasizes interpretation and the contextual meaning of media content. Additionally, quantitative analysis aims to generate measurable numerical data, whereas qualitative analysis seeks to explore the underlying meanings and discourses within media texts.

Results and Discussion: The findings reveal a significant disparity in media coverage of the presidential and vice-presidential candidates on iNews TV and Metro TV during the 2024 Indonesian election. iNews TV's disproportionate focus on Ganjar Pranowo and Mahfud MD, as evidenced by a higher frequency of mentions, suggests potential media bias. Conversely, Metro TV provided more balanced coverage, addressing various candidates and political issues, including government policies and economic trends. The stark contrast in media exposure between iNews TV and Metro TV highlights differing editorial priorities, potentially shaped by the political affiliations of media owners. iNews TV's emphasis on Ganjar and Mahfud suggests favoritism, while Metro TV's broader coverage indicates an interest in diverse political narratives. The analysis of media coverage on Okezone.com reveals a clear bias in favor of presidential and vice-presidential candidates Ganjar Pranowo and Mahfud MD. In contrast, Metrotvnews.com presents more balanced coverage, including opposition figures such as Anies Baswedan.

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Research Implications: This study provides recommendations to the Press Council, the journalism community, and the Indonesian Broadcasting Commission, emphasizing safeguarding mass media institutions from external interventions, particularly from media owners' political interests, political parties, and other external influences. Ensuring media independence is crucial for maintaining journalistic integrity and upholding democratic values.

Originality/Value: This study contributes novelty and originality as it is the first to examine the objectivity of news reporting and media bias in Indonesia during the 2024 general election through quantitative and qualitative approaches.

Keywords: objectivity, news, Indonesia, general, election, sustainable development goals (SDG).

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1 INTRODUCTION

Elections are one of the main pillars of a democratic system, allowing the people to select leaders and determine the country's policy direction. As an integral part of the democratic process, the mass media plays a crucial role in ensuring that the information received by the public during the election is accurate, balanced, and objective (Kam *et al.*, 2020) (Lockwood & Krönke, 2021). Edmund Burke positioned the mass media as the fourth pillar of democracy, following the executive, judiciary, and legislative branches (Ukka, 2020) (Lenci, 2023). The mass media acts as a watchdog, monitoring and voicing public interests concerning legal services, governance, and legislative performance (Jacobs *et al.*, 2022). The media is tasked with holding the government accountable based on the principle of freedom, aiming to produce information that upholds the functioning of democracy (de Albuquerque, 2019) (Flavin & Montgomery, 2020).

As guardians of democracy, the mass media provide accurate information, facilitate healthy public discourse, and oversee the electoral process to ensure it adheres to democratic principles (Wolton, 2019) (Soroka & Wlezien, 2022). Media coverage shapes public perceptions of leadership candidates and influences voter participation and decision-making (Memoli, 2020). Consequently, the objectivity and credibility of the media in reporting

on elections become critical factors in ensuring the integrity of the electoral process (Chuey *et al.*, 2024) (Primig, 2024).

However, alongside the growing role of mass media, concerns have arisen regarding the objectivity of news coverage during election periods (Kovalenko, 2019). Amid external interventions and influences, bias and partiality in reporting are often inevitable, mainly when media outlets are owned or controlled by media moguls with specific political affiliations (Garz & Rickardsson, 2023) (Kedia & Kim, 2021). The ownership of media by individuals or groups affiliated with political interests poses a significant challenge to the principle of media independence (Garz *et al.*, 2023) (Bajo *et al.*, 2020).

Several Indonesian mass media companies, which control extensive networks spanning television stations, online media, print outlets, and radio, are owned by media conglomerates that are also senior leaders of political parties that endorsed candidates in the recent presidential election (Muzhaffar Shidqi & KN, 2024). For example, Surya Paloh, the owner of the Media Group (which includes Metro TV, Media Indonesia, and Metrotvnews.com), serves as the Chairman of the Nasdem Party (Farida & Yoedtadi, 2020), while Hary Tanoesoedibjo, the owner of four television stations under the MNC Group—INews and Okezone.com—is the Chairman of the Perindo Party (Fahadi, 2019). In the recent presidential election, the Nasdem Party nominated Anis Baswedan and Muhaimin Iskandar as presidential and vice-presidential candidates (Kompas.com, 2022). In contrast, the Perindo Party joined the coalition supporting Ganjar Pranowo and Mahfud MD (CNN.com, 2023). There is a noticeable bias and support in the media coverage of these candidates, likely influenced by the political affiliations of the media owners (Yoedtadi, 2024).

While editorial teams strive for neutrality and objectivity in their reporting, news presentations can be influenced by the political biases of media owners (Bajo *et al.*, 2020) (Park, 2021). The mass media often serve as battlegrounds for competing political interests, potentially undermining their independence (Jamil, 2020) (Van Remoortere & Vliegthart, 2023).

When the mass media fail to uphold their independence, elections risk becoming instruments of political manipulation, undermining the broader public interest (Kedia & Kim, 2021)(Garz & Rickardsson, 2023). The media tend

to become political propaganda tools, with the information disseminated to the public at risk of being biased, thereby eroding the democratic process itself (Ozerturk, 2022)(Farafonova, 2023).

In many cases, media ownership concentrated within certain business groups with political affiliations has raised concerns about bias in news reporting (Mahriva & Wuryanata, 2021) (Park, 2021) (Silitonga & Muqsith, 2023). Tapsell (2017) has long warned of the risks posed by oligarchic dominance in controlling media outlets in Indonesia.

Media independence implies that no external parties, beyond the editorial team, should influence the editorial policies of a media organization. Journalistic work must remain neutral or, at the very least, fair in presenting news, as the public interest is the fundamental reason for journalism's existence (Sweet *et al.*, 2020). Thus, maintaining independence is critical in fulfilling the profession's duties. Editorial independence is crucial to ensuring that the public interest drives news production and adheres to established news values (Silitonga & Muqsith, 2023). This principle must be consistently demonstrated by mass media outlets in their reporting. The Indonesian Journalistic Code of Ethics, Article 3, explicitly outlines the need to uphold balance and independence in news reporting (Oktavia & Sukri, 2022). In addition, television media is subject to further regulations under the Broadcasting Code of Conduct, Articles 11 and 22, and the Broadcasting Program Standards issued by the Indonesian Broadcasting Commission (KPI) in 2012, specifically Articles 11, 40, and 71, which require television editors to maintain independence and neutrality (Martono & Annurdi, 2019).

The Broadcasting Code of Conduct (P3SPS), particularly Article 2, mandates that broadcasters must be fair and proportional in their coverage of election candidates and/or regional election candidates. Furthermore, Paragraph 3 prohibits broadcasters from partisanship toward any election participant, while Paragraph 4 forbids broadcasters from airing programs funded or sponsored by election candidates (Martono & Annurdi, 2019).

The inability of mass media to maintain objectivity in election reporting can lead to various negative consequences (Dunaway *et al.*, 2015). Biased or partisan reporting can exacerbate political polarization among the public,

reduce trust in the media, and even unfairly influence election outcomes (Burlachuk, 2019) (Kovalenko, 2019).

Numerous studies have demonstrated that media ownership plays a significant role in influencing news bias during elections. Ownership structures can shape the partisanship of media coverage, often aligning with media owners' political or business interests, thus influencing public perception and election results (Morris & Morris, 2022). This effect is particularly evident during election periods when political persuasion intensifies. In Sweden, newspapers owned by the same entity tend to display similar political bias, regardless of local audience preferences. This homogeneity in partisanship becomes more apparent during elections, suggesting that media owners prioritize political influence over market differentiation (Garz & Rickardsson, 2023).

The acquisition of the Wall Street Journal by News Corp. resulted in a noticeable shift in reporting bias. This bias was particularly evident in favorable coverage of companies linked to News Corp., even when the underlying news was negative. This highlights how stock ownership can alter business-related reporting to serve corporate interests (Kedia & Kim, 2021). In Indonesia, oligarchic media ownership during the 2014 presidential election resulted in polarized news coverage. TV channels owned by various oligarchs displayed explicit biases in favor of specific candidates, using their platforms to advance personal political agendas. This polarization undermined journalistic standards of balanced reporting, illustrating the power of ownership in shaping electoral narratives (Fahadi, 2019) (Khamim & Sabri, 2019)(Zahra *et al.*, 2024).

In Israel, the launch of the newspaper Israel Hayom by billionaire Sheldon Adelson exemplifies how media ownership can be used as a political investment. The paper's right-leaning bias significantly influenced election outcomes, benefiting specific political parties and altering the political landscape (Grossman *et al.*, 2022). Market conditions and ownership structures shape the impact of media ownership on election-related bias. Research on the Swedish newspaper market suggests that newspapers with market leadership and network ownership offer greater diversity in political perspectives, potentially reducing bias. However, the study also found that ownership forms such as private ownership, foundations, and public shares have minimal impact

on internal diversity. Therefore, while ownership structures can influence the diversity of political perspectives in news coverage, market conditions and economies of scale also play a crucial role in shaping a pluralistic media system during elections (Garz *et al.*, 2023).

Based on the background outlined above, this article aims to analyze the performance of objectivity and bias in the coverage of the 2024 Election by television and online media outlets owned by media proprietors affiliated with political parties, specifically iNews TV, Okezone.com, Metro TV, and Metrotvnews.com. The period selected for analysis spans from the start of the campaign period to Election Day, covering the timeframe from November 28, 2023, to February 14, 2024.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 INDONESIAN MEDIA CONGLOMERATE

The current structure of the Indonesian mass media market is moving towards an oligopoly. Previous research indicates that national mass media channels tend to be concentrated among 13 conglomerates. It was found that these conglomerates are actively involved with political parties. These developments are leading to the emergence of Indonesian partisan media and energizing democracy (Fadillah & Zhenglin, 2020). The owners of this media group are also affiliated with political parties. For instance, Surya Paloh of the Media Group is the Chairman of the Nasdem Party; Hari Tanoesoedibjo of MNC Group was the Chairman of the Perindo Party; and Aburizal Bakrie of Visi Media Asia is the former Chairman of Golkar and currently serves as the Chairman of the Golkar Party Advisory Board (Tapsell, 2017).

Current competition in Indonesian mass media influences internal press work practices that shape public opinion, often benefiting only the interests of advertisers and conglomerates. This phenomenon is particularly evident during the 2014 and 2019 presidential election contests between Joko Widodo and Prabowo Subiyanto. The mass media frames the news according to its owners' ideology and political affiliations (Muchlis, 2021) (Dahlia & Permana, 2022).

Media neutrality has been a long-standing debate among journalism practitioners. Some argue that media neutrality is challenging because the media constantly constructs news. In reality, news does not merely reflect existing reality. Media content delivered to the public does not emerge from a "vacuum" that is neutral and free of interests, nor is it distributed by a medium free of distortion (Musfialdy, 2019). Westerstahl (Pristianita, 2020) includes neutrality as an element of the concept of objectivity. Westerstahl divides objectivity into two criteria: factuality and impartiality. Factuality can be achieved when it is supported by truth and relevance. Meanwhile, impartiality can only be maintained when it is supported by balance and neutrality. Therefore, the call for neutrality alone does not position the media well, as neutrality is just one part of a more significant requirement: achieving objectivity.

Objectivity is one of the fundamental principles of mass media in news production. Nasution (2015) notes that eight principles must be fulfilled in producing news: accuracy, independence, objectivity, balance, fairness, impartiality, respect for privacy, and accountability to the public. Journalists must implement this principle to earn public trust. (Nasution, 2015) further stated that objectivity cannot be separated from balance in news writing. The principle of objectivity aims to prevent journalists from succumbing to personal biases or influences from others when viewing and describing events. This principle encourages journalists to examine issues from multiple perspectives to reflect the truth.

The development of the media industry in Indonesia reflects capital interests and the logic of profit accumulation, resulting in oligopoly and concentration of media ownership (Cahyana, 2022). This research considers the practice of media oligopoly as it reaches a stage that jeopardizes citizens' rights to information, as the media operates as an instrument that solely represents the interests of its owners and the power they embody.

2.2 THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF THE MEDIA

An analysis of contemporary media in Indonesia can be viewed from the

perspective of the political economy. This study highlights the complex interconnection between the media and diverse interest groups, including corporate owners, government entities, and other influential stakeholders. In this context, media is an instrument of domination and societal influence. The concept of domination indicates that the dissemination and interaction of mass communication are greatly influenced by the political and economic frameworks within a society. Consequently, the reality constructed by the media often reflects bias and distortion (Dwita, 2015).

The political economy of media framework primarily examines the relationship between political-economic structures, media industry dynamics, and media ideology. Research within this paradigm focuses on ownership, control, and the operational mechanisms governing media markets. From this viewpoint, mass media institutions are viewed as an economic system intricately linked with political structures (Zamroni, 2022). This approach asserts that external political and economic forces, rather than internal editorial policies, predominantly shape media content. Key determinants such as media ownership, financial capital, and revenue streams play a critical role in defining the nature of media coverage, influencing both the selection of events reported and the broader editorial direction (Aminudin, 2016).

Political economy theory investigates social relations, particularly reciprocal interactions within goods and services production, distribution, and consumption processes (Dwita, 2015). The theory emerged in response to the profound impact of mass media on societal transformation. Given its extensive reach, mass media influences local and global sociopolitical and cultural dynamics and plays a pivotal role in generating economic surplus. This is grounded in the premise that mass media is a conduit between production and consumption. Advertising, as a key component of media messages, has the potential to drive product and service sales by shaping audience perceptions and purchasing behaviors (Aminudin, 2016).

Within the economic and political framework, mass media can propagate and reinforce specific economic and political ideologies while marginalizing alternative perspectives. One critical aspect often overlooked is the ideological function performed by the media, which frequently aligns with the interests of

its owners (Yoedtadi, 2021). Hence, an analytical approach integrating economic and political dimensions is essential to understand media dynamics comprehensively. This underscores the relevance of political economy studies in media research. Further expanding on this perspective, Murdock and Golding (as cited in Baran & Davis (2012) argue that political economy analysis emphasizes the role of dominant economic institutions, such as banks and financial markets, in shaping other social structures, including mass media.

2.3 THE HIERARCHY OF INFLUENCES MODEL

Reese and Shoemaker (2017) concluded that five factors influence media in the news production process: (1) individual influence or the influence of media workers: The personality traits of journalists undoubtedly affect how they perceive an event or fact. (2) media routines: The content produced by mass media is influenced by various selection processes in Communication, including deadlines and other time constraints, spatial limitations (space), duration constraints, the inverted pyramid structure in news writing, and the reporter's trust in official sources in the produced news. (3) organizational influence: One of the key objectives of media organizations is to shape content according to their goals. These media objectives significantly affect the content generated. (4) external influences: This includes lobbying by interest groups on media content, pseudo-events staged by public relations practitioners, and government regulations in the press sector. (5) ideological influence: Ideology here does not necessarily refer to grand ideas; it can also encompass political labeling or meaning-making. The way journalists interpret events through specific lenses or perspectives is, in a broader sense, a form of ideology.

2.4 PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Several studies have been conducted to examine media bias in news reporting. For example, Fox News has favored Republican candidates in multiple presidential and Senate elections (DellaVigna & Kaplan, 2007), while *The Sun* notably endorsed Brexit, influencing public opinion (Foos & Bischof,

2022). However, there remains a lack of research explicitly investigating media bias in countries with an emerging or unconsolidated democratic system, such as Indonesia.

Numerous studies indicate that market conditions and media scale influence pluralism and diversity in political perspectives (Garz *et al.*, 2023). Nevertheless, a significant gap exists in understanding how these dynamics vary across media markets in developing countries or those with less established democratic systems. Current research predominantly concentrates on contexts in developed nations like Sweden (Garz & Rickardsson, 2023), where media operate within relatively stable and mature frameworks. Consequently, there is a pressing need for further examination to determine whether these dynamics also manifest in developing nations like Indonesia.

Most of the available studies concentrate on traditional media, such as newspapers (Garz & Rickardsson, 2023) (Kedia & Kim, 2021) and television (Fahadi, 2019). However, as the influence of digital media continues to grow, research on how multi-platform media ownership—spanning both traditional and digital media—affects news bias and political perceptions during elections remains limited. Previous research, such as that by Garz *et al.* (2023), suggests that the form of ownership—whether private, public, or foundation-based—has only a minor impact on the diversity of internal perspectives. Nonetheless, there is no clear consensus on how each ownership form operates in highly competitive media environments influenced by political or business pressures. For instance, studies related to Indonesia (Fahadi, 2019) (Khamim & Sabri, 2019) highlighting the strong influence of media oligarchies, current literature gives insufficient attention to how media ownership structures affiliated with political parties affect journalistic standards, especially during the 2024 elections. Current literature reveals a significant research gap concerning the impact of media ownership on the reporting practices of television and online media outlets associated with political parties during the 2024 presidential election cycle. Despite existing studies on media bias and ownership influence, there is a notable lack of focused analysis on how these affiliations shape editorial decisions and content presentation in this specific electoral context.

3 METHODOLOGY

This study examines the objectivity of news reporting by mass media affiliated with political parties during the 2024 general election. The research method employed in this study is Media Content Analysis (MCA) and a case study. This research uses two approaches, namely quantitative and qualitative or mixed methods. Researchers use sequential mixed methods procedures where researchers elaborate or expand one method's findings with another (Creswell, 2018). This mixed-method research is conducted to obtain a more comprehensive analysis of the phenomena occurring in the media. The difference is that the quantitative approach focuses more on objective measurement and statistics, while the qualitative approach emphasizes interpretation and the contextual meaning of media content. Additionally, quantitative analysis aims to produce measurable numerical data, whereas qualitative analysis seeks to understand the meanings and discourses behind media texts.

As the unit of analysis that will assess the performance of objectivity and bias in the coverage of the 2024 elections, a sample of news broadcast during the campaign period from November 28, 2023, to February 14, 2024, is taken. The media used consists of two television outlets and two online media owned by media owners affiliated with political parties. Four media outlets are considered to fit the classification, namely, two media affiliated with the Indonesian Unity Party or Perindo, which are the television station INews TV and the online news site Okezone.com, as well as two media affiliated with the National Democratic Party or Nasdem, which are the television station Metro TV and the online news site metrotvnews.com. The news broadcast samples were taken from online news websites (<https://www.okezone.com>) and (<https://www.metrotvnews.com>), while the news samples in the form of television broadcasts were taken from the respective media's YouTube accounts, namely (youtube.com/@officialiNews) and (youtube.com/@metrotvnews).

Table 1

Number of News

News Source	Amount
youtube.com/@officialiNews	621 news item
youtube.com/@metrotvnews	348 news item
https://www.okezone.com	7,584 news item
https://www.metrotvnews.com	1,867 news item
TOTAL	10,420 news item

For the quantitative analysis, data was collected using the Phyton program from the two online news websites and two television broadcasts mentioned above. The keywords used are: “Anies Baswedan,” “Muhaimin Iskandar,” “Prabowo Subianto,” “Gibran Rakabuming Raka,” “Ganjar Pranowo,” “Mahfud MD,” “2024 Presidential Election,” “2024 Presidential Debate,” and “2024 Presidential Campaign.” In the data retrieval from online media, the first step is to visit news websites by entering the keywords to gather the desired news articles, followed by data extraction. Next, sorting is carried out based on the desired period duration, and unnecessary data is cleaned up, after which the content of the news articles is examined. Subsequently, the content of the articles is collected automatically and saved in Excel format.

The first step in collecting data from news YouTube channels is to collect YouTube videos based on keywords and media. The keywords used are "candidate name + presidential election 2024 + media name" or " presidential election 2024 + presidential debate 2024 + media name." After that, videos will be collected based on the aforementioned keywords and saved in Excel.

After that, data cleaning was performed. After being cleaned, the URLs are gathered in one column and used to collect transcripts from the videos. The results are obtained in Excel and then analyzed using corpus analytics tools. The data from this cleaning process is then ready for analysis. Previously, the data was grouped into four corpora: 1) okezone.com, 2) metrotvnews.com, 3) Official INews Youtube, and 4) Metro TV Youtube. The data was collected based on media to enable comparisons between media following the research objectives and analyzed based on the three available features. First, the Word Analysis or Frequency Analysis feature determines how often a candidate's name is mentioned in a particular media outlet. Second, the Keyword Analysis feature compares one corpus with another to find out which words are more

likely to appear in one media compared to others. Third, the Keyword in Context or Concorde Analysis feature is used to identify which words frequently accompany a keyword. For example, if the names of presidential and vice-presidential candidates are used as keywords, this feature can reveal how a particular candidate is discussed in the media.

The qualitative research stage was carried out using the case study method. The object of the research is the editorial policy of four media affiliated with political parties regarding reporting on the 2024 Election. The data mining technique in the qualitative research approach uses in-depth interviews with four informants from iNews TV, Metro TV, Okezone.com, and metrotvnews.com. The informants were selected purposively based on the criteria of senior journalists who hold positions and form editorial policies in their media.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

An analysis of the frequency of mentions of presidential and vice-presidential candidates in iNews TV's news coverage on the YouTube channel from November 28, 2023, to February 14, 2024, reveals a significant bias in coverage. The findings suggest that iNews TV disproportionately focused on the political pairing of Ganjar Pranowo and Mahfud MD. This pair appeared significantly more frequently than other candidates, with Ganjar Pranowo featured in 1,798 news items and Mahfud MD in 1,372. Combined, Ganjar and Mahfud appeared in a total of 3,170 news items.

These figures reveal a significant disparity compared to the other candidate pairs, with Prabowo Subianto and Gibran Rakabuming appearing in 520 and 851 news items, respectively (a total of 1,371 news items), and Anies Baswedan and Muhaimin Iskandar appearing in 438 and 317 news items respectively (a total of 755 news items).

Table 2

Frequency of Appearance of Candidate Names in iNews TV

Keyword	Frequency
Anis Baswedan	438
Muhaimin Iskandar	317
Prabowo Subiyanto	520
Gibran Rakabuming Raka	851
Ganjar Pranowo	1798
Mahfud MD	1,372

Based on these findings, iNews TV prioritizes coverage of the Ganjar Pranowo and Mahfud MD pair. This is further demonstrated by the keyword analysis results, which indicate that the name "Ganjar" appears more frequently than the names of other presidential and vice-presidential candidates. A similar pattern emerges from the thematic analysis of iNews TV news reports, which tend to highlight and criticize the free lunch program proposed by Prabowo Subianto and Gibran Rakabuming Raka. iNews TV's coverage contrasts the free lunch program with the free internet initiative proposed by Ganjar Pranowo and Mahfud MD.

An analysis leveraging big data conducted on the official MetroTVNews YouTube channel (@metrotvnews) reveals prevalent trends, topics, and political figures that are frequently addressed. This analysis elucidates how Metro TV delivers its content and identifies the key subjects that are currently emphasized regarding the presidential and vice presidential candidates in the upcoming 2024 election. One important aspect of this analysis is to see the frequency of mentioning the names of the presidential and vice presidential candidates in the 2024 Election on Metro TV, namely Anies Baswedan (319 times), Muhaimin Iskandar (95 times), Prabowo Subianto (521 times), Gibran Rakabuming Raka (591 times), Ganjar Pranowo (310 times), and Mahfud MD (425 times).

Table 3

Frequency of Appearance of Candidate Names in Metro TV

Keyword	Frequency
Anis Baswedan	319
Muhaimin Iskandar	95
Prabowo Subiyanto	521
Gibran Rakabuming Raka	591
Ganjar Pranowo	310
Mahfud MD	425

Metro TV, a media outlet affiliated with one of the parties endorsing Anies Baswedan and Muhaimin Iskandar as presidential and vice presidential candidates, presents an analysis of public discourse. The findings indicate that Prabowo Subianto, Gibran Rakabuming Raka, and Mahfud MD are the figures most frequently mentioned in discussions. This prevalence may be attributed to their significant roles in national political developments and their engagement with various current issues. Additionally, Anies Baswedan and Ganjar Pranowo also receive notable attention, suggesting that matters about them excite Metro TV's audience.

An analysis of the frequency of coverage on Okezone.com shows Ganjar Pranowo dominating with 36,832 mentions, far surpassing other political figures such as Prabowo Subianto, Anies Baswedan, and Gibran Rakabuming. Mahfud MD is also prominently featured with 21,340 mentions, indicating that this pair receives significantly more coverage on Okezone.com than other media platforms. In contrast, figures like Prabowo and Anies receive less attention on Okezone.com, suggesting that this media outlet may be more focused on promoting Ganjar-Mahfud's campaign and activities.

Table 4

Frequency of Appearance of Candidate Names in Okezone.com

Keyword	Frequency
Anis Baswedan	1,245
Muhaimin Iskandar	324
Prabowo Subiyanto	2,355
Gibran Rakabuming Raka	1,770
Ganjar Pranowo	36,832
Mahfud MD	21,340

Okezone.com's coverage of Ganjar Pranowo and Mahfud MD favorably portrays these individuals as competent and ethical leaders. However, the evident media bias in this coverage indicates that Okezone.com may be leveraging its platform to advance a narrative that benefits this pair. In contrast, metrotvnews.com and other media outlets provide a more balanced representation of alternative political figures.

On metronews.com, Anis Baswedan is the most reported candidate, with 3,562 mentions, far exceeding that of other candidates. His status may support Anis' popularity as one of the candidates supported by the Nasdem party, whose general Chairman is the owner of metrotvnews.com. Likewise, Muhaimin Iskandar, Anis Baswedan's vice presidential candidate, was mentioned 975 times on metrotvnews.com.

Prabowo Subianto was mentioned 845 times. Although this is lower than Anies and Muhaimin, it remains significant considering his position as one of the strongest presidential candidates. Following him in the frequency of mentions are Gibran Rakabuming Raka with 539 mentions, Ganjar Pranowo with 461 mentions, and Mahfud MD with 425 mentions.

Table 5

Frequency of Appearance of Candidate Names In Metronews.com

Keyword	Frequency
Anis Baswedan	3.562
Muhaimin Iskandar	975
Prabowo Subiyanto	845
Gibran Rakabuming Raka	539
Ganjar Pranowo	461
Mahfud MD	425

4.2 QUALITATIVE RESULTS

In covering the 2024 Election, the media is required to be neutral and always present objective and balanced news. In reality, this non-partisan attitude cannot be implemented, considering that several television stations and online media are owned by business people who have political parties. As an informant from iNews TV explains, the television station is owned by the Chairman of Perindo Hary Tanoesoedibjo. "There is no independence, there is

no balance. The number of reports on party A (Perindo) will be more than the number of parties B, C, and D. Moreover, the number of parties cannot breathe. They do not have high news value or anything. The character does not have one. It does not make any movement; it sinks even more. Moreover, it has no news value. Even if there is, we will still play. However, in an issue that is indeed somewhat unprofitable. "This means that the issue then does not harm party A." iNews TV informant.

Likewise, with the Metro TV informant, the owner of the television station is the general Chairman of the Nasdem Party. The coalition of the Nasdem Party, PKS, and the Democratic Party has nominated Anies Baswedan as the 2024 presidential candidate. "Yes, if that is the case, sir, it is editorial policy. However, there is still news that is no longer a secret. Each TV station has preferences for its respective candidates. TV because the case in Indonesia is that TV owners are also politicians. They own TV, are media owners, and are also politicians. In Indonesia, that is the case, although some people do not. Well, it just so happens that several TV stations, including Metro, are owned by politicians who have candidates; for now, we know Anies Baswedan and that is what has reached us. I am a producer, which is not at a think tank's level. We only accept policies. There is indeed an increased portion for Anies, more than the others." Metro TV informant.

So far, television editors affiliated with political parties feel that their editorial policies and attitudes do not violate the rules and cannot be blamed. The indicator that there is no violation is that there were no complaints from the public, and the Press Council or the Indonesian Broadcasting Commission did not issue a warning. "So, the Press Council also does not see this as a problem. Why? Because there was nothing, the public summoned and complained about us. Moreover, the public also feels this is normal. The public has nothing to fight about. Nobody complained to the Press Council. They do not see this as a problem. So, if this is a problem, they should have a channel to report it. Report to KPI, the Press Council." iNews TV informant.

Unlike iNews TV, Metro TV, affiliated with the Nasdem Party in its broadcast policy, is still trying to share broadcast slots with other presidential candidates, Ganjar Pranowo and Prabowo Subiyanto. Even though it is possible

that Anies Baswedan still gets a more significant portion in this distribution, Metro TV continues to consider coverage of other presidential candidates due to their prominence as public figures. For instance, Ganjar Pranowo is highlighted as the Governor of Central Java, while Prabowo Subianto is covered as Minister of Defense. "For covering coverage of each presidential candidate. It's always been there, and it has always been like this: sometimes if Anies is free, he is no longer governor. Anies is there. Ganjar also has material, but he is not a presidential candidate but a governor. We still show the context of the news as governor, but the face is Ganjar's. Likewise, Prabowo has had relatively many events because he is the defense minister and is currently capitalizing on his closeness to Jokowi. He had many incidents with Jokowi. In terms of high news value, people want to see the cover and end up with quite a lot. So, in practice, there are always faces, whether Prabowo, Ganjar, or Anies. "As for Anies, he is the presidential candidate because there is no other title." Metro TV informant.

The same editorial approach is also applied by journalists at metrotvnews.com, an online media outlet under the same ownership as Surya Paloh, the Chairman of the Nasdem Party. According to one informant from Metrotvnews.com, bias favoring Anies Baswedan is inevitable and natural. However, the editorial team strives to maintain balanced reporting among the presidential candidates. One journalist stated, "If you ask whether we are biased, then yes, we are. I cannot say that we are not. We are indeed biased. However, we employ various content strategies. We try to develop content strategies that allow us to produce balanced reporting while ensuring that our bias is not too overt." Metrotvnews.com informant

Several considerations drive this approach. First, metrotvnews.com journalists aim to avoid alienating supporters of other presidential candidates. Second, as an online media platform, their reporting must consider search engine optimization (SEO) factors carefully. Third, political campaign advertising revenue from different candidates is a crucial income source for the media.

Not much different from the editorial policy of iNews TV, as well as the online media Okezone.com, which is owned by Hary Tanusudibyo, Chairman of

the Perindo party, one of the parties supporting the candidacy of Ganjar Pranowo and Mahfud MD. One of the high-ranking online media editorial team officials confirmed an editorial policy to side with the Perindo party and presidential candidates Ganjar Pranowo and Mahfud MD. The reason behind the editorial's partiality is the shared vision between the editorial team and Perindo, namely the vision of building a better government. "Siding with Perindo is more towards us helping Perindo to create a more positive government. There is a common vision—many similarities. Because our space is limited, we will prioritize those that suit us. For example, Perindo supports Ganjar. Of course, Ganjar will receive more coverage than the others. Because of what? Because its suitability is closer to the activities, programs, messages, vision, and mission carried out by Ganjar. "Our editors see that Ganjar's message must be conveyed to the public." Okezone.com informant.

4.3 DISCUSSIONS

The dominance of Ganjar Pranowo and Mahfud MD in iNews TV's coverage may reflect a particular preference or bias in the presentation of information regarding the presidential and vice-presidential candidates for the 2024 elections. The higher frequency of coverage could provide greater public exposure to these candidates, potentially influencing public perception.

Moreover, the elevated frequency of coverage for Ganjar Pranowo and Mahfud MD raises the possibility of media bias in the form of favoritism. iNews TV may implicitly offer hidden support to the Ganjar-Mahfud pair through the intensity of coverage and the narratives constructed within the news reports. Media favoritism can shape public opinion and perceptions of candidates' vigor in political contexts (Pfister *et al.*, 2023). The influence of media owners with political affiliations on media reporting significantly contributes to bias in news coverage. This bias often manifests as a slant in news presentations, aligning with the political interests of the owners rather than the audience's preferences (Garz & Rickardsson, 2023).

These significant differences in keyword occurrence may reflect certain tendencies or biases within each media outlet's coverage of the candidate pair

Ganjar Pranowo and Mahfud MD. iNews TV prioritizes coverage of this pair, potentially indicating hidden support or efforts to shape a positive public perception. Meanwhile, Metro TV's lower frequency suggests a preference for different narratives and highlights other presidential and vice-presidential candidates. The difference in exposure in the two media indicates the existence of an editorial agenda in influencing public opinion (Satriyadi *et al.*, 2023) (Kshirsagar & Yasmin Rohman, 2024).

Comparing MetroTV and iNews TV data is important to gain a broader perspective. This analysis provides an overview of how the two channels raise different topics, even though they are both news sources. For example, the keyword "Ganjar" appears 1,798 times on INews YouTube but only 310 times on Metro TV. This shows that INews discusses Ganjar Pranowo more often in its content. The keyword "Mahfud" is mentioned 1,372 times on INews YouTube, while only 425 times on Metro TV. This indicates that INews raises topics related to Mahfud MD more often. This comparison reveals that although both channels discuss similar topics, iNews TV focuses more on specific issues, such as Ganjar Pranowo and Mahfud MD. In contrast, Metro TV more often discusses issues related to government, policies, and political parties.

Meanwhile, coverage on Okezone.com regarding the presidential and vice-presidential candidates Ganjar Pranowo and Mahfud MD tends to highlight their competence and integrity. Through well-structured syntax, narratives that reinforce the candidates' image, and themes focusing on stability and competence, Okezone.com frames Ganjar and Mahfud as worthy choices to lead Indonesia. This positive coverage is likely linked to the political affiliations and business interests of Okezone.com's owner, MNC Group, which is owned by Hary Tanoesoedibjo, a businessman and politician. MNC Group, which owns various media platforms, including iNews TV, is likely utilizing Hary Tanoesoedibjo's influence to present favorable coverage of the Ganjar-Mahfud pair, given the potential political or business benefits (Khamim & Sabri, 2019).

In comparison, on metrotvnews.com, Anies Baswedan received more coverage with 3,562 mentions. At the same time, Ganjar Pranowo and Mahfud MD were reported less frequently. Metrotvnews.com appears to maintain a more balanced focus on various political figures, especially those associated

with the opposition. The platform also demonstrates more equitable reporting among Ganjar Pranowo, Prabowo Subiyanto, and Gibran Rakabuming Raka, though Ganjar Pranowo still receives substantial attention. This data highlights a bias in Okezone.com's reporting, which tends to favor Ganjar Pranowo and Mahfud MD. The effort to maintain balanced reporting in the 2024 election, despite Metro TV and Metrotvnews.com acknowledging their bias in favor of Anies Baswedan, is primarily driven by their experience in previous elections. During the earlier election cycle, their overt support for presidential candidate Joko Widodo led to hostility from supporters of other candidates. This experience has made them more cautious in their approach to political reporting.

Overall, Okezone.com's coverage of Ganjar Pranowo and Mahfud MD reinforces their positive image as competent and integral leaders. However, the evident media bias in this reporting suggests that Okezone.com may be leveraging its platform to promote narratives favorable to the pair (Zahra *et al.*, 2024). In contrast, metrotvnews.com and other platforms provide more balanced coverage of other political figures.

An analysis of data obtained from metrotvnews.com during the campaign period reveals significant disparities in media focus among the presidential candidates. This variation reflects each candidate's relative popularity and visibility in the lead-up to the election. Notably, candidates including Ganjar Pranowo, Prabowo Subianto, Anies Baswedan, Gibran Rakabuming Raka, Muhaimin Iskandar, and Mahfud MD garnered considerable attention on the platform. Among these, Ganjar Pranowo and Mahfud MD emerged with the most prominent media exposure, indicating a more substantial presence in the public discourse during the campaign.

The Press Council long ago appealed to the media to be neutral in reporting on the election by the Journalism Code of Ethics mandate. Taking sides with one of the election contestants will place the media in the partisan media category. McQuails (Yoedtadi & Pribadi, 2018) stated that partisanship in the media will reduce the quality of the information produced, and media known to the public as partisan media will lose public trust. Why is public trust important for the media? Mass media is a social institution. Therefore, it

maintains public trust (Meliala & Uliyah, 2018) (Maniou & Papadopoulou, 2024). The oversight capabilities of the Press Council regarding media ownership remain insufficient. This inadequacy, exacerbated by the trend of media conglomeration, leads the Council to dismiss complaints about conflicts of interest and ethical breaches frequently. The predominant issues that emerge revolve around violations of the established code of ethics, often manifesting as inaccuracies in reporting. Such inaccuracies typically indicate ownership bias or an imbalance in reporting, which compromises journalistic integrity. (Meliala & Uliyah, 2018).

The editorial statements illustrate the editorial team's failure to uphold editorial independence, thereby compromising the objectivity and balance of their policies. This situation aligns with the argument presented by Shoemaker and Reese in "Mediating the Message," which posits that media content is shaped by five key factors, including the influence of media ownership, categorized as organizational influences. (Reese & Shoemaker, 2017). Media owners' involvement in politics can create conflicts of interest in the editorial room. In this context, the coverage presented by a media outlet can be aligned with the political interests held by its owner (Rifa' i, 2020). On the other hand, editorial policies that favor one political contestant violate the principles of objectivity and balance, as stated by Shaughnessy and Stadler (Yoedtadi & Pribadi, 2018). Objectivity and balance in journalistic work aim to ensure that the news produced can present accurate facts and avoid bias (Dunaway *et al.*, 2015) (Jinsheng Pan *et al.*, 2023). With objectivity and balance, the facts in the news seem to be placed in a "neutral" zone between two different opinions or two competing political contestants (Wolfgang *et al.*, 2019).

Tapsell (2018) identifies three significant trends related to media oligarchy in Indonesia. Firstly, media owners are gaining political strength. Secondly, the wealth of media owners tends to increase. Thirdly, media companies tend to become dynastic, where many children of media owners occupy strategic positions in the editorial room, such as the CEO of digital media or editor-in-chief. The consequence is that mainstream media in Indonesia has become more partisan. This depiction reflects that the interests

of media owners, both in the political and business realms, can generate conflicts of interest that impact the products of journalism.

The results of this research align with research by the Media Regulation and Regulator Monitor (PR2Media). It reveals that Indonesian mass media serves as a platform for expression, disseminating positive ideas, and shaping public opinion. They have also transformed into agents of meaning-making propaganda through opinion manipulation, bias, and political collaboration. The relationship between the mass media and politics is no longer independent, as media owners also hold political authority, creating a mutual dependency and alignment between the two (Masduki *et al.*, 2023).

Media is part of a social entity closely related to other social institutions with specific authority. This relationship indirectly influences the message delivery process. Reese and Shoemaker (2017) state that the media is a generally structured area, which is influenced by logic and organizational structure, which is influenced by political aspects. The editorial policy is the foundation for consideration within mass media institutions, especially regarding current developing issues. Editorial policy is crucial. When a mass media outlet lacks an editorial policy, consistency in its news delivery becomes uncertain (Rifa'i, 2020)(Miranda & Camponez, 2024).

Editorial policy regulates how mass media influences public opinion through news coverage(McCombs & Valenzuela, 2021). Mass media performs three functions in packaging news: first, using political symbols; second, message packaging; and third, performing the agenda-setting function. When undertaking these three actions, mass media may be influenced by various internal factors, such as specific editorial policies regarding political power, the political interests of media managers, and the media's relationship with specific political forces (Heriyanto, 2018).

Beer (as quoted in Rifa'i, 2020) states that every mass media outlet has an editorial policy to adhere to. As the owner or representative of the owner, the Editor-in-Chief or General Manager has the right to establish and enforce editorial policies. In this context, media independence in Indonesia remains a relevant issue. According to Beers' definition (as quoted in Rifa'i, 2020), media independence is interpreted as non-compliance with pressures related to

dominant corporate ownership. As reported by the Independent Journalists Alliance (AJI), six key issues were identified in newsrooms ahead of the 2014 elections: (1) editorial interference for the political interests of media owners, (2) self-censorship on issues related to media owners, (3) journalists being unable to refuse directives from superiors, (4) journalists hesitant to report concerns, (5) declining public trust in the press, and (6) normalization of press abuse within journalistic communities (Kompas, 2023). Tapsell (2018) notes that journalists in Indonesia still face difficulties in carrying out their reporting duties with complete freedom. To fulfill the primary role of journalists in the democratic context, which is to criticize the wealthy and those in power, they require autonomy that allows them to perform these tasks without the pressure or fear of warnings or dismissal.

5 CONCLUSION

During the 2024 Indonesian elections, a significant divergence in the coverage of presidential and vice-presidential candidates by iNews TV and Metro TV was observed. iNews TV exhibited a pronounced bias, as evidenced by a higher frequency of mentions dedicated to candidates Ganjar Pranowo and Mahfud MD. This disproportionate emphasis suggests a potential editorial strategy to shape public perception favoring these individuals, indicating a possible instance of media bias.

Conversely, Metro TV adopted a more balanced approach, systematically covering a broader spectrum of political figures and issues. Their reporting encompassed crucial topics such as government regulations and economic developments, reflecting a more comprehensive editorial philosophy. This contrast in media representation underscores the differing editorial priorities between the two networks and raises questions about their respective ownership structures' political affiliations and influences. Such disparities in media exposure can have significant implications for Indonesia's electoral landscape and public discourse.

An analysis of Okezone.com's media coverage reveals a discernible bias favoring the candidacies of Mahfud MD and Ganjar Pranowo for the presidential

and vice-presidential roles, respectively. These candidates receive significantly more references than their rivals, with Okezone.com portraying them as competent and ethical leaders. The site emphasizes their platforms on job creation, food sovereignty, and economic development.

The favorable portrayal of Ganjar Pranowo and Mahfud MD can be traced back to the ownership structure of Okezone.com, which operates under the MNC Group. This conglomerate has established political and commercial interests that likely skew the media narrative, favoring its preferred candidates. Media ownership dynamics raise concerns about the potential for distorted political narratives, which can shape public perception and influence electoral outcomes.

In contrast, metrotvnews.com provides a more balanced approach to political coverage, featuring various political figures, including opposition candidates like Anies Baswedan. This disparity in editorial tone highlights the implications of media ownership on the neutrality of political discourse in the lead-up to elections.

The comparative analysis reveals significant differences in editorial strategies employed by the two media outlets. Okezone.com prefers the Ganjar-Mahfud ticket, which effectively amplifies their visibility. In contrast, metrotvnews.com adopts a more inclusive approach, providing broader coverage of various candidates. This divergence in media representation underscores the pivotal influence of media in shaping political narratives, especially during electoral periods, where media bias can critically affect voter perception and the integrity of democratic processes.

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