

Peace Narratives As A Strategy For Digital Conflict Resolution After Indonesia's 2024 Elections

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Abstract

This study examines the role of peaceful narratives as a conflict resolution strategy in the digital arena following Indonesia's 2024 general elections. Amidst rising political polarization, especially among youth active on social media platforms such as TikTok and X (formerly Twitter), digital spaces have become arenas for both political expression and social division. The research applies qualitative content analysis to explore how "peaceful narratives" can reduce symbolic violence and promote inclusive political awareness. Utilizing Social Identity Theory and Johan Galtung's "peace by peaceful means" framework, the study analyzes the dynamics around the viral hashtag #PrettyGirlsDon'tVote02, which symbolizes political satire and identity polarization. Findings reveal that peaceful narratives counteract digital conflicts by fostering empathy, respectful dialogue, and civic engagement, thereby strengthening social cohesion and democratic deliberation. The study recommends reinforcing political literacy, creating healthier dialogue platforms, promoting public verification of information, and encouraging positive social role models. Ultimately, peaceful narratives not only mitigate digital conflicts but also lay the foundation for national unity and resilience in Indonesia's evolving democratic landscape.



Keywords: Peace Narratives, Social Identity, Digital Politics, Conflict Resolution.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, as a country with a population of more than 285 million, has experienced massive digitalization in the social and political lives of its citizens. Based on the 2025 *We Are Social* report, there are approximately 143 million social media users in Indonesia, with a penetration rate of 97.8% (We Are Social, 2025). The younger generation are the dominant users of platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, X (formerly Twitter), and YouTube. For them, social media is no longer just a means of entertainment, but also a forum for opinion formation, discussion, and even digital political participation.

The transformation of political participation among the younger generation is evident in the shift from conventional activities such as voting at polling stations to new forms of engagement such as disseminating political information, uploading content critical of policies, participating in digital petitions, and joining online social movements (Sari, 2025). Although it opens up wider opportunities for participation, it must be acknowledged that the expansion of this digital space also presents serious challenges. Social media has become a space that accelerates the circulation of opinions, while also opening the door to disinformation, polarization, and political narrative manipulation.

One phenomenon that reflects this dynamic is the hashtag “Pretty Girls Don't Vote 02” on TikTok, which emerged after 100 days of President-elect Prabowo Subianto's administration. This hashtag is popular among young women and has become a symbol of their political expression towards a particular candidate pair, even though that pair did not win the election. Such posts not only demonstrate digital political engagement, but also spark debate about the depth of political awareness behind them: whether this is a form of reflective criticism, or simply a trend-following hashtag without a strong argumentative basis.

Public response was divided. Some criticized the hashtag as permissive and lacking political maturity, while others considered it a legitimate form of freedom of expression in a digital democracy. This phenomenon indicates that social media has the potential to reinforce polarization, especially among young people. Social interactions on political issues in the digital space often get stuck in *an echo chamber*, a space that only reinforces the opinions of one's own group and weakens dialogue across identities.

From the perspective of *Social Identity Theory*, this dynamic occurs because individuals identify themselves with certain groups (*ingroups*) and differentiate themselves from other



groups (*outgroups*), which is reinforced by social media algorithms that display content according to user preferences (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). This reduces the possibility of alternative narratives emerging that could broaden perspectives.

In this context, a narrative of peace needs to be put forward to provide an alternative means of easing tensions. Johan Galtung, in his theory of "*peace by peaceful means*," emphasizes the importance of constructive conflict resolution without violence in any form (Galtung, 1996). An inclusive and empathetic narrative of peace can provide space for the younger generation to engage in critical politics without getting caught up in symbolic conflict or verbal violence.

Therefore, this study focuses on how peaceful narratives can be integrated into digital political discourse to reduce polarization in the digital space, particularly in response to the hashtag "*Pretty Girl Don't Vote 02*." This study aims to explore how peaceful narratives on social media *platforms* can build a more inclusive, critical, and reflective political awareness among the younger generation.

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach with content analysis to explore narratives of peace in the hashtag "*Pretty Girl Don't Vote 02*" on social media, specifically on the X (Twitter) and TikTok platforms. The main focus of this study is to analyze data that has emerged since this hashtag began in 2025, specifically during the first 100 days of President Prabowo Subianto's administration.

To collect data, this study uses the technique of analyzing relevant posts and user interactions to find additional sources relevant to the topic in digital conversations. Furthermore, the collected data is analyzed using thematic analysis, which aims to identify patterns of peaceful narratives that emerge in public conversations on social media.

This study also integrates the social identity theory proposed by Tajfel and Turner (1979) to understand how the political identities of individuals or groups on social media shape their narratives. In addition, the approach used in this study refers to Johan Galtung's theory of peace by peaceful means, which emphasizes the importance of constructive conflict resolution without violence, both physical and verbal.

The analysis process in this study follows the stages proposed by Siyoto and Sodik (2015), which involves three main steps: first, data reduction, which requires researchers to select data relevant to the topic and objectives of the study and eliminate data that does not support them. Second, data presentation, in which the selected data is organized in a systematic manner to



facilitate understanding (Siyoto & Sodik, 2015). Third, drawing conclusions, which is done based on a predetermined conceptual framework, to interpret the data in depth and provide meaning in accordance with the research objectives.

As part of this process, this study also refers to the analysis method proposed by Sugiyono (2013), which emphasizes the importance of systematic and structured data processing and presentation in order to produce valid and accountable findings (Sugiyono, 2013). In this case, the researcher verified and validated the findings through data triangulation to increase the reliability of the research results. Using this method, this study aims to provide a deeper understanding of how peaceful narratives can be applied in responding to digital political expression hashtags that are developing among Indonesia's younger generation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Social Identity and Polarization in the Hashtag “*Pretty Girls Don’t Vote 02*”

Social Identity Theory (SIT) was first introduced by Henri Tajfel (1978) and later developed in collaboration with John Turner (1979). This theory explains that individuals categorize themselves into certain groups, whether based on profession, cultural preferences, or other social statuses. These categories form a person's social identity, which consists of three main elements: *social categorization*, *social comparison*, and *group membership value*.

Individuals tend to divide their social world into two: *the ingroup*, which is the group they feel they belong to, and *the outgroup*, which is the group they do not identify with. In a political context, this theory is widely used to explain identity conflicts, polarization, and competitive behavior between groups with different statuses (Huddy, 2001). Huddy also notes that strong social identities in politics are often stable and formed through complex histories and cultures, which can reinforce exclusivity and conflict between groups.

The phenomenon of the hashtag #PrettyGirlDontVote02 can be analyzed through the lens of Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Social media has become an arena where individuals not only express their political opinions, but also form social identities through symbolic engagement with certain groups. In this context, the “pretty girl” identity is satirically mobilized as a form of satire against political choices. This hashtag first appeared through Shasa Zhanian's satirical post on the X platform (formerly Twitter) on March 20, 2025. In her tweet, she wrote:

"What were your achievements in 2024? I am not a 02 voter. That's all, thank you."

This statement was disseminated in the form of a short video on TikTok, accompanied by



visuals and photos of users who symbolically identified themselves as "*pretty girls*" who did not vote for presidential candidate 02. Although initially humorous in nature, this narrative developed into a collective political expression that triggered sharp polarization in the digital space.

Social media, in this case, reinforces the mechanism of ingroup and outgroup formation. Individuals involved in this hashtag form a shared identity (ingroup) as a form of resistance against certain political groups (outgroup). Netizens' comments show how this group identity is formed and reinforced. This kind of labeling reinforces social boundaries between groups that are for and against the hashtag, narrowing the space for dialogue and reinforcing stereotypes.

The hashtag *#PrettyGirlDontVote02* did not appear out of nowhere, but was a symbolic response to public demands regarding various policies and political maneuvers of the current administration. Several issues that led to the emergence of this hashtag include:

1. Revision of the TNI Law, which is considered contrary to the spirit of reform.
2. Economic and social policies that are considered anti-people.
3. As well as several other accompanying demands.

Shasa Zhanias's post stating, "*I am not a 02 voter, thank you very much*," has become a symbol of resistance against political dynamics that are considered problematic. The digital identity as a "*pretty girl*" has become a symbolic means of creatively expressing disappointment, while also forming solidarity among groups with similar political views (Wardani, 2025). Here are some examples of comments found:

Pro Hashtag *#PrettyGirlsDon'tVote02* (Supportive), comments showing support for this hashtag, whether as satire, political criticism, or expressions of identity:

*"Pretty girls don't vote 02 cheers to usss," by X account @gab*** "Pretty girls are not 02 voters, cheers to us,"*

"I'm still proud to be part of voters 01 because pretty girls don't vote 02."

*"It's funny to see them fuming because of just a harmless hashtag." "Alhamdulillah, proud to be part of the 58%." (referring to the victory of the non-02 candidate pair, while joining in on the hashtag trend) by the account @its****

These comments reinforce the *ingroup* narrative by creating a collective symbol and shared identity, namely "*pretty girl*" as a representation of non-02 voters. There is a strong satirical nuance and the use of digital aesthetics as a tool for political communication. Expressions such as *cheers to us* show the celebration of shared identity and exclusion of *the outgroup* (02 voters).

Counter-Hashtag *#PrettyGirlsDon'tVote02* (Rejection of the Hashtag)

"Applying cancel culture to 02 voters won't make things better, you know!" "Still proud to



vote for 02, wlee."

"Besides being slim, fair-skinned, straight-haired, sharp-featured, and slender, it turns out Indonesia's beauty standards have expanded again, guys... you have to vote for 01 or 03..."

"At least don't be FOMO!"

"This hashtag is being debated, but when it comes to the TNI Bill, everyone stays silent?"

This group rejects the hashtag narrative because it is considered exclusive, discriminatory, and even triggers *cancel culture*. Some comments imply that this hashtag corners 02 voters, reduces political identity to visual stereotypes, and expands the boundaries of social exclusion. Neutral / Criticism of Polarization (Tends to be Moderate or Reflective):

"Guys, everyone has the right to choose, and now it's not about 01/02/03 anymore. After all, we don't know whether 01 or 03 is better. Now it's about our country."

"Everything has its pros and cons, but at least we can choose the one with the fewest cons, right?"

"Stay sane, you guys who are still in your right mind."

*"Applying cancel culture to 02 voters won't make things better. Democracy means everyone has the right to choose, and being critical is just part of the choice. By account @va**"*

These comments come from Camp C, which is trying to break out of the political conflict dichotomy. They believe that this kind of debate actually divides the people and shifts the focus from political substance to symbolic identity alone. They also criticize the digital atmosphere for reacting too quickly to hashtags, yet remaining passive towards more crucial policy issues. It can be seen that Camp A (pro) uses hashtags as a form of satirical, aesthetic, and collective political expression of political disappointment, Camp B (contra) sees these hashtags as a form of *cancel culture* and covert political discrimination, while Camp C (neutral) regrets the polarization among the people caused by social media hashtags and encourages substantial reflection on political choices.

The Application of Galtung's Theory of Peace by Peaceful Means in Responding to Polarization

In the context of contemporary socio-political conflicts, as reflected in the social media hashtag *#PrettyGirlsDon'tVote02*, a peaceful approach is important to prevent escalating tensions. Johan Galtung, in his *Peace by Peaceful Means* theory, defines peace not only as the absence of violence, but as a creative and non-violent transformative process. According to Galtung, peace is holistic and multidimensional, requiring the simultaneous elimination of direct (physical),



structural (institutional), and cultural (normative) violence (Shirley, 2014).

This theory becomes increasingly relevant when applied to responding to conflicts based on political and symbolic identities. In the hashtag *#PrettyGirlsDon'tVote02*, polarization emerged between groups with different political preferences, triggering emotional and even aggressive responses in the digital space. Amidst these conditions, the narrative of peace that developed sought to reduce tensions through an inclusive and reflective approach. This is in line with the spirit of Galtung's theory (1996), which emphasizes that conflict resolution should be carried out non-violently, by promoting empathy, honest communication, and creativity in finding common ground. Furthermore, Galtung (2004) outlines an approach to peace in four main components:

1. The existence of unresolved or untransformed conflicts;
2. The danger of violence arising as a reaction to the conflict;
3. Empathetic, creative, and non-violent conflict transformation;
4. The realization of peace as the best outcome of the conflict transformation process, which is also the best approach to building long-term security.

These four elements are evident in the dynamics of digital hashtags such as *#PrettyGirlsDon'tVote02*. Horizontal conflicts between supporters with unresolved values and identities, the potential for verbal or symbolic violence, and the emergence of narratives that attempt to encourage cross-group understanding, are all efforts to transform conflict in order to create a peaceful space in digital democracy.

According to Galtung, peace is also rooted in a fair and equitable social structure. Peace is a form of revolution towards equality, which upholds the principle of reciprocity: *if you want peace, give others what you yourself want* (Galtung, 2004). In this context, social media users who promote tolerance and respect for different political choices are actually practicing the principle of active peace. They not only prevent verbal violence, but also build a more equitable social foundation.

Thus, applying the principle of *peace by peaceful means* in responding to polarization in the digital space opens up opportunities for social reconciliation. This approach is not only important for policymakers, but should also become a shared culture in society, especially among the younger generation of social media users. The practice of conflict transformation should be part of our lifestyle, just like maintaining cleanliness or living a healthy life (Galtung, 2004). Here are some examples of neutral comments that are part of a peaceful narrative:

"Hi to all the pretty girls who didn't vote for 02! From me, who isn't as pretty as you.

However, to all the beautiful ladies who didn't vote for 02, you need to know something.



*Whoever the leader is, there will always be pros and cons. Why argue about something that has already been decided? This country needs solutions, not just nostalgia for defeat. Politics is dynamic, don't let your mindset be static. It's better to think about how to voice your opinion and monitor all these new policies so that those that are risky and dangerous can be immediately canceled. The VAT increase to 12% on all goods and services will ultimately only apply to luxury goods and services, and the Tapera contribution has been postponed until 2027 at the latest. Thanks to whom? All of us! Let's unite and close ranks, not divide" – by the account Vinn*****

This comment reflects an important element of *conflict transformation* in Galtung's theory, namely shifting the focus from past conflicts to future solutions. The emphasis on collaboration, social control over policy, and civil solidarity are forms of non-violent and creative conflict transformation. This message contributes to a culture of peace by encouraging inclusive *civic engagement*. This approach reduces the potential for symbolic violence and strengthens post-election social cohesion, thereby supporting the third principle of Pancasila: *Indonesian Unity*.

*"I thought the presidential election was over, but it turns out you guys are bringing it up again by blaming each other, just because you don't like the government's decision. If there is a decision that you don't like, exercise your rights as citizens because this is a democracy. Express your aspirations, follow up, but don't blame your fellow citizens. What's the point of mocking each other? Will it change the rules if you put each other down? Don't engage in mutual insults and derogatory remarks just because of different opinions; it doesn't change anything." By account @ris****

This comment emphasizes the importance of distinguishing between criticism of policy and attacks on group identity. This is in line with the first pillar of Galtung's approach: identifying unresolved conflicts, but rejecting symbolic violence as a means of resolution. He calls for the expression of aspirations through peaceful and democratic mechanisms. This comment helps to build a *culture of peaceful conflict transformation* in society, encouraging citizens to remain critical without attacking their fellow citizens. This strengthens unity in diversity of opinion and upholds *deliberative democracy*.

"I know that the Dunning-Kruger effect is very strong in Indonesia. For example, if there is a difference of opinion, people immediately consider each other enemies, insult each other, judge/hate each other, and even belittle each other personally. Our country is a democracy, right? But by discriminating against those who have different opinions, you are not reflecting a democratic attitude because you do not respect differences. The point is, we



should be critical if something is off track, especially if it harms us as critical citizens who need to openly reject it. Now is not the time to argue over factions 123 because such understanding could backfire and divide the nation. We should unite to criticize the government when it strays. Open your eyes and look at the third principle of Pancasila!" By account @pa**

This comment explicitly points to cultural violence in the form of discrimination against groups with different opinions. It calls for political enlightenment and the strengthening of democratic values as a way to prevent conflicts caused by emotional polarization. This comment forms a discourse of peace that frees society from the shackles of political fanaticism. It is a concrete example of the transformation of a culture of violence into a culture of dialogue, which is at the heart of Galtung's approach to peace.

"Guys, come on, be smart. It doesn't mean that we as a "society" have to be divided like this. Democracy means that everyone has the right to choose, and being critical is just part of that choice. The election ended more than a year ago, so stop and focus on the things that really need to be protested." by account @de***

This comment expresses the spirit of active peace, which is a situation where the public not only rejects violence but also actively engages in the process of improving the system. This reflects the fourth element of Galtung's approach: *peace* as the best outcome for achieving security. By encouraging the public to exercise *their right to criticize* in a healthy manner and promoting a focus on substantive issues, this comment emphasizes *democratic participation* as a peaceful way to avoid conflicts that divide the nation. These four comments from are real-world examples of the application of Galtung's approach to peace in Indonesia's digital space. Each one demonstrates the following elements:

1. Identification of conflicts (between camps and after election results),
2. Awareness of the potential for symbolic violence (polarization, ridicule),
3. Call for conflict transformation (through dialogue and empathy),
4. Ultimate goal: peace and national unity.

They reflect the potential of civil society as a key actor in building a culture of peace, restoring trust between groups, and realizing *Indonesian unity* within the framework of a healthy democracy.

The Influence of Peace Narratives on the Hashtag "*Pretty Girl Don't Vote 02*"

In a digital ecosystem that rapidly spreads opinions and emotions, peaceful narratives



serve a strategic function as *a neutralizer of socio-political conflicts*, especially among the younger generation who are active users of social media. The existence of peaceful narratives acts as a counterbalance to the torrent of hate speech, *labelling*, and polarization resulting from political differences.

Peaceful narratives on social media play an important role in reducing symbolic and verbal violence by encouraging rational discussion and mutual respect. In addition, these narratives promote inclusive political literacy, opening up space for critical thinking and acceptance of differences of opinion. Peaceful narratives also strengthen social cohesion by creating a space for dialogue that prioritizes understanding, as well as increasing social resilience to disinformation through clarification and verification of information. Finally, peaceful narratives create new social *role models*, inspiring the public to express their opinions constructively and without hatred, making the digital atmosphere healthier.

After the hashtag *#PrettyGirlsDon'tVote02* sparked widespread responses from the digital community, a wave of peaceful narratives emerged, encouraging tensions to subside. One crucial moment was the clarification from creator Shasha, who acknowledged her mistake and called for a return to the spirit of unity:

"Hi, everyone! I sincerely apologize for my controversial tweet yesterday. I understand that this statement has sparked a lot of controversy and developed arguments from what I said. I apologize because my tweet was offensive and certainly caused a lot of debate among all of us. I believe I am responsible for setting this straight. Regardless of which party we support, which figures we admire, we are all Indonesians, and what we all truly want is for this country to be better. It was such an eye-opening moment for me to see how protective we are of this country. ...etc."

This clarification had an impact:

- **Becoming a Catalyst for Conflict Reduction:** This clarification demonstrates moral and social responsibility for narratives that have caused polarization. This reinforces the value of *accountability* in the digital space.
- **Raising Collective Awareness of the Importance of Unity:** The public's emotional response to this clarification shows that society actually shares the same fundamental collective value, namely love for the homeland.
- **Encouraging Narratives of Digital Recovery and Reconciliation:** This clarification provides space for healing and opens up new, more empathetic conversations, showing that social media can be a space for transformation, not just conflict.



Peaceful narratives and public clarifications, such as those made by creator Shasha, prove that digital spaces can be vehicles for socio-political reconciliation. With an approach that emphasizes empathy, respect for differences, and public responsibility, the digital community, especially the younger generation is encouraged to:

- Engage critically while upholding democratic values,
- Participate in monitoring public policy with a peaceful approach,
- Be part of the solution, not a source of polarization.

Thus, peaceful narratives not only reduce digital conflicts, but also serve as a foundation for building unity and national resilience based on collective awareness and non-violent communication.

CONCLUSION

From the discussion of peaceful narratives in responding to polarization, particularly in the context of the hashtag "*#PrettyGirlsDon'tVote02*," it can be concluded that peaceful narratives play an important role in creating a healthy and constructive space for dialogue amid sharp differences of opinion. This peaceful narrative not only serves as a barrier against the escalation of symbolic or verbal violence, but also as a tool to increase inclusive political literacy, which encourages the public to think critically and be open to different points of view. In the digital world, peaceful narratives help strengthen social cohesion and resilience, as well as create social role models that encourage people to speak without hatred and respect one another. In response to increasing polarization, these peaceful narratives are important for maintaining social stability, especially in digital spaces that risk division.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- **Strengthening Political Literacy and Peace Culture:** Programs that promote political literacy and peace culture need to be strengthened, both in the digital space and in everyday life. Education on the importance of critical thinking and respecting differences must be part of public education, especially for young people who are active on social media.
- **Development of Healthy Dialogue *Platforms*:** It is important to encourage the creation of digital platforms that promote the principles of dialogue and mutual respect. By promoting narratives of peace, the digital space can become more constructive and inclusive in bringing together different views.



- Promoting Clarification and Verification in the Digital World: To avoid the spread of disinformation that could exacerbate polarization, there needs to be a culture of clarification and verification in the dissemination of information. The digital community must be trained to check the accuracy of information before spreading it, and to avoid hoaxes that could worsen divisions.
- Creating Positive Social *Role Models*: Public figures and digital personalities can serve as role models in conveying peaceful narratives. By setting a positive example in discussing issues without hatred and respecting differences of opinion, they can inspire the public to behave similarly.
- Developing Peace Campaigns: Social campaigns that promote messages of peace, understanding, and national unity need to be increased, both on social media and at the local community level. These campaigns can help reduce political and social tensions and strengthen a sense of unity and nationalism.

With these steps, it is hoped that the narrative of peace can continue to develop and contribute to the creation of a more united, harmonious Indonesia that respects diversity.

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