

THE ELECTORAL FAILURE OF THE INDONESIAN SOLIDARITY PARTY IN THE 2024 LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS

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Abstract

Despite adopting a digital platform and receiving support from national political figures, including President Joko Widodo and Kaesang Pangarep, who became the party's chairman, the Indonesian Solidarity Party (PSI) suffered an electoral failure in the 2024 legislative elections. This journal analyzes the factors behind this failure. Adopting the digital party concept perspective, the study reveals that the PSI's electoral failure was due to its failure to implement digital platform logic in its governance. This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach, utilizing a theory-based case study method and data collected through interviews with a PSI division head and PSI cadres, to analyze this phenomenon. Secondary data from scientific literature and digital media also support the study. The findings reveal that the PSI was unable to establish a comprehensive operational system. Furthermore, the PSI's digital transformation was not substantive or holistic. PSI has not established a participatory digital membership system, an open cadre mechanism for selecting leadership candidates, a deliberative channel for developing programs and policy objectives, or a two-way communication system for shaping its public image. PSI's resources are not managed transparently, nor are they used to build a digital ecosystem aligned with the five pillars of a digital party. As a result, PSI has been unable to establish a superbase, an active and loyal community of supporters, to serve as the party's main strength. In the context of open proportional elections, the PSI lacks a mechanism to support its candidates through its digital platform. Thus, the party's digital visibility cannot be converted into electoral votes. Additionally, support from political elites cannot significantly impact the party's electoral results due to the lack of an ideal, systemic institutionalization of the party. PSI relies too heavily on Jokowi and Kaesang. This study shows that digital parties cannot function solely by relying on digital platforms; they also require institutionalization as robust political structures.

Keywords: Digital Party; Digital Migration; Superbase; Indonesian Solidarity Party

Abstrak

Meskipun mengadopsi platform digital dan menerima dukungan dari tokoh politik nasional, termasuk Presiden Joko Widodo dan Kaesang Pangarep yang menjadi ketua umum partai, Partai Solidaritas Indonesia (PSI) mengalami kegagalan elektoral dalam pemilihan legislatif 2024. Jurnal ini menganalisis faktor-faktor di balik kegagalan ini. Dengan mengadopsi perspektif konsep partai digital, studi ini mengungkapkan bahwa kegagalan elektoral PSI disebabkan oleh kegagalannya dalam menerapkan logika platform digital dalam tata kelolanya. Studi ini menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif, dengan metode studi kasus berbasis teori dan data yang dikumpulkan melalui wawancara dengan seorang kepala divisi dan kader-kader PSI, untuk menganalisis fenomena ini. Data

sekunder dari literatur ilmiah dan media digital juga mendukung studi ini. Temuan penelitian mengungkapkan bahwa PSI tidak mampu membangun sistem operasional yang komprehensif. Lebih lanjut, transformasi digital PSI tidak bersifat substantif atau holistik. PSI belum membangun sistem keanggotaan digital yang partisipatif, mekanisme kaderisasi terbuka untuk memilih calon pimpinan, saluran deliberatif untuk mengembangkan program dan tujuan kebijakan, atau sistem komunikasi dua arah untuk membentuk citra publiknya. Sumber daya PSI tidak dikelola secara transparan, juga tidak digunakan untuk membangun ekosistem digital yang selaras dengan lima pilar partai digital. Akibatnya, PSI tidak mampu membangun superbase, yaitu komunitas pendukung yang aktif dan loyal, untuk menjadi kekuatan utama partai. Dalam konteks pemilu proporsional terbuka, PSI tidak memiliki mekanisme untuk mendukung para calonnya melalui platform digital. Dengan demikian, visibilitas digital partai tidak dapat dikonversi menjadi suara elektoral. Selain itu, dukungan dari elite politik tidak dapat berdampak signifikan terhadap hasil elektoral partai karena kurangnya pelembagaan partai yang ideal dan sistemik. PSI terlalu bergantung pada Jokowi dan Kaesang. Studi ini menunjukkan bahwa partai digital tidak dapat berfungsi hanya dengan mengandalkan platform digital; mereka juga memerlukan pelembagaan sebagai struktur politik yang kokoh.

Kata Kunci: Partai Digital; Migrasi Digital; Superbase; Partai Solidaritas Indonesia

INTRODUCTION

Over the past two decades, global politics has undergone significant changes due to technological disruption in modern society. These changes have influenced the way political parties communicate with their constituents and have created new forms of organization, leadership, and political participation (Barokah, 2022). Amid the legitimacy crisis facing political parties as traditional institutions, digital platforms promote new alternatives that connect political parties with citizens more effectively, efficiently, personally, and directly. New parties that utilize digital platforms have emerged with narratives of progressiveness, inclusivity, and participation. These parties are referred to as digital parties because they use digital platforms for their operations and structure their organization based on digital platforms' logic (Gerbaudo, 2019).

Digital parties can be identified by their use of digital platforms to build interactive, emotional connections with supporters and create loyal digital communities, known as superbases (Gerbaudo, 2019). This configuration shows that a party's strength does not lie in the depth of its ideology or conventional structures, as is typical of most parties, but rather in its capacity to build intense, emotional digital relationships. Digital parties are also supported by the hyperleadership model. Hyperleadership refers to a central figure who embodies the party in the digital space. This figure serves as the

party's symbol and controls its political communication (Gerbaudo, 2019). In the context of digital parties, image, responsiveness, and the intensity of communication are more decisive than the hierarchical structure of conventional parties.

Indonesian politics has also experienced a wave of digital transformation. The relatively new Indonesian Solidarity Party (PSI) has positioned itself as a young, progressive, and socially active party (Keifer & Effenberger, 2019). Since its inception, the PSI has adopted a model consistent with the characteristics of a digital party, including the intensive use of social media, political communication through creative content, and an informal communication style. Ahead of the 2024 elections, PSI received support from Indonesian elite figure Joko Widodo. This support was reflected in the rise of Jokowi's youngest son, Kaesang Pangarep, as PSI chairman (Dongoran, 2024c). This strengthened PSI's image as an elite-backed party with high visibility in the public sphere.

PSI's intensive use of social media platforms and support from prominent political figures were expected to help the party enter parliament. However, PSI won less than three percent of the vote and failed to meet the legislative threshold. This shows that strong digital visibility and support from political figures do not necessarily translate into a large electoral vote. It also means that a party's success in

the digital space does not guarantee electoral power or voter support. This issue challenges assumptions about the effectiveness of digital communication and strategy and raises deeper questions about the role of digital parties in Indonesia's complex electoral system.

The main question arising from this issue is why parties with high visibility through digital platforms and political elite support still failed in the elections. This question is particularly relevant in the context of Indonesian elections, where electoral success depends not only on a party's popularity but also on the accumulation of votes for legislative candidates in various electoral districts. This open proportional system requires strong, distributed structural cooperation; institutional party support for candidates; and the capacity of the party machinery at the local level. Visibility alone is insufficient if it is not accompanied by an organizational structure that promotes candidate competitiveness within the party.

Fitzpatrick (2021) offers a theoretical conceptual framework of the Five Pillars of the Digital Party model to help understand this issue, consisting of membership, leaders and candidates, policy programs, public image, and resources. According to this model, the process of party digitalization involves more than just communication between the party and its constituents; it also involves the structural and operational transformation of the party. According to Fitzpatrick (2021), a digital party integrates digital platform-based member recruitment mechanisms, provides open channels for party leadership succession and nomination, develops policy agendas based on member participation through digital platforms, and builds transparent political funding mechanisms through digital platforms. Digitalizing a party is an institutional transformation, not merely a matter of fulfilling the party's aesthetic needs.

The five pillars of digital parties play an important role in electoral politics and ensure the success of digital parties. The digitization of each pillar determines whether parties can generate structural support for electoral success or merely promote visibility. Without a substantive digital structure, the relationship

between the party and the public becomes one-sided, and the digital party merely exhibits a pattern of superficial participation (Gerbaudo, 2019). Digital platforms should encourage the formation of a superbase: an organized, mobilizable community of supporters. This superbase will become the engine of the party and not merely an audience for its political content on social media.

The paradox of PSI's electoral failure is an important issue to discuss, especially in the context of party digitalization. This paper aims to analyze and explain why a party can still fail electorally even if it has adopted a strategic approach based on digital platforms and has the support of political elites. Failing to build a substantive digital structure impacts electoral support and indicates a low level of institutionalization. A party's digital transformation without institutionalizing its internal mechanisms reflects an institution's fragility when it relies solely on visibility. Thus, the party's electoral failure can be understood as an institutional failure within the framework of a digital party. This paper will demonstrate that the Indonesian Solidarity Party's (PSI) failure is not only due to a lack of digital, platform-based strategies or political elite support but also to the party's inability to integrate digital platform logic into its governance structure.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs qualitative methods in its writing and analysis. It examines the phenomena that prompt innovative and digital management of PSI, which is supported by political elites but fails to produce electoral results that could bring them to parliament. Qualitative research helps to explain phenomena from an emic perspective. A case study was used to explicitly explore the issue. This study employs a theory-based case study method, drawing on Gerbaudo and Barbera's concept of a digital party to bridge the gap between PSI's political practices involving digital platforms and its electoral outcomes.

ANALYSIS

Evaluation of PSI's Digital Migration within the Five Pillars Model Framework

The evaluation of PSI's digital migration was conducted using Fitzpatrick's five-pillar model framework for digital parties. The five pillars include membership, leaders and candidates, policy programs, public image, and resources (Fitzpatrick, 2021). This conceptual framework is used not only to test the technical integration of a party's digital operations but also to assess the degree to which a party's operations align with the logic of digital platforms. The five pillars serve as indicators of the institutionalization of political parties that utilize digital platforms as a fundamental element of their governance structure.

This analysis critically examines whether PSI has undergone substantive or merely technical digitalization as a party. A party's digital transformation based on digital platform logic will result in an emotional connection between the party and its supporters. The party will also experience a decentralization of power (Gerbaudo, 2019).

1. Membership

PSI has adopted a digital platform for member registration that is accessible via the official PSI website. This mechanism allows people to register online at any time and from anywhere, as long as they have an internet connection. In this area, PSI has technically migrated to digital. However, research findings indicate that PSI's digital migration in the membership pillar has only reached the technical aspect of candidate registration. Digitalization of the party has not evolved into a sustainable relational management system that extends from the registration stage to other administrative processes related to party membership. Interview results indicate that the membership information system is managed by the DPP IT team, suggesting centralized management. Additionally, the system lacks interactive functions that would enable members to communicate across regions or form cohesive political alliances.

In general, PSI's discussion forums, whether offline, online, or hybrid, are one-way. These forums are held so that party elites can convey

Table 1. Semarang City Cooperation

No.	Year	Form of city	Government/Related Agencies Cooperation
1	2016	MoU	Split City Government, Republic of Korea and Semarang City Government
2	2016	Agreement on the Establishment of Sister City Cooperation	Fuzhou City Government, PRC and Semarang City Government
3	2016	MoU	Junggu City Government, Ulsan Metropolitan, South Korea and Semarang City Government
4	2018	MoU	Nanjing City Government, PRC and Semarang City Government
5	2018	MoU	Brisbane City Government, Australia and Semarang City Government
6	2022	Extension of Memorandum of Understanding	Junggu City Government, Ulsan Metropolitan, South Korea and Semarang City Government
7	2022	Extension of Memorandum of Understanding	Fuzhou City Government, PRC and Semarang City Government

Source: VOI, 2023.

directives or other information; they are not intended to encourage substantive member participation. Unlike digital parties in Europe, PSI lacks a digital engagement mechanism that encourages deliberation and participation. Podemos, for example, has a platform called *Participa* to encourage member engagement (Lisi, 2019). According to informants, although many PSI members are recruited online, they are often not very involved and left to each DPW to organize according to each region's capacity. PSI has utilized digital platforms but does not provide a system that allows for open forums, online training, or member advocacy channels.

This condition indicates that PSI does not establish two-way connections, one of the indicators of creating a superbase (Gerbaudo, 2019). Party membership is not only about quantity; it is also about the emotional and participatory connection between the party and its members in creating political meaning. Without a system that can foster meaningful relationships between cadres and political parties, members may only be present for administrative purposes, rather than as a political force of the party.

The absence of this digital cadre mechanism also indicates weak institutionalization of party functions. In the context of the five-pillar model, digitalization, particularly concerning the membership pillar, must create a deliberative space for members through digital platforms. However, PSI does not leverage digitalization to strengthen the party's internal structure. The connections PSI builds tend to ignore collective and sustainable aspects.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the PSI membership pillar lacks the transformation of digital platform logic into party membership governance. PSI does not use digital platforms to institutionalize relationships between members or between the party and its members. Rather than forming a superbase, PSI's digital migration in the membership pillar only results in the passive recruitment of cadres and does not ensure the party's electoral structure in each region.

2. Leaders and Candidates

In terms of leadership and candidates, digital parties integrate digital technology into their operations to manage the process of nominating leaders. The selection and election of leadership candidates is based on the logic of digital platforms that promote openness and direct elections by all members. Unlike conventional parties, digital parties do not limit the selection of leadership candidates to the party elite. Instead, they provide space for all members to participate through digital platforms (Fitzpatrick, 2021).

The PSI has a closed system for registering leadership candidates. This is due to a centralized decision-making pattern determined solely by the DPP and DPW, which does not involve all party members. Unlike digital parties in Europe that provide online polls, public testing, and open discussions, the mechanism established by PSI does not allow for participation or verification by members or the public. Tempo Magazine's findings also indicate that the Chairman of the Party Advisory Council, Jeffrie Giovanni, heavily influences the party's strategic decisions, including Kaesang's promotion to PSI Chairman ahead of the 2024 elections (Pramudita, 2024). This type of election mechanism suggests that digital platforms are merely being used for administrative purposes; there has been no procedural transformation of party governance regarding inclusive and deliberative candidate selection.

Kaesang's rise as PSI chairman further reinforces centralized power distribution based on figurehead politics. Sources say Kaesang's rise, along with the party's rebranding to associate itself with Jokowi, is expected to attract voters inspired by Jokowi and Kaesang as icons of youth. The party's efforts to highlight Kaesang's leadership exemplify hyperleadership, as Gerbaudo defines it, where the party centralizes the narrative, image, and charismatic authority around a single figure, who then becomes the face of the party in public communication. Such practices can positively impact the party's visibility. However, these practices often hinder the development of the party's organizational structure (Gerbaudo, 2019).

Digital migration in the leadership and candidate pillars indicates the presence of an

open cadre mechanism supported by digital platforms. This mechanism provides opportunities for the public and members to participate in getting to know, assessing, and selecting party leadership candidates. Further mechanisms of digital integration in this area include digital cadre forums and political training (Fitzpatrick, 2021). However, in the context of PSI, digital integration does not encourage substantive governance transformation; it is merely used to introduce party leaders selected by party elites.

3. Policy Programme

Digital platforms encourage deliberative processes in policy formulation and decision-making, enabling party members and digital communities to actively participate in shaping the party's political agenda and objectives. This pillar assesses not only the content of party policies but also all aspects of policy, from formulation to implementation (Fitzpatrick, 2021). Every digital party policy and program must facilitate meaningful interactions that connect leaders, members, and the public in substantive online discussions. Often, parties only package their narratives and political agendas for consumption on social media.

In the context of PSI, it was found that the party's political program was not developed through a participatory digital platform process. Often, the narratives raised by the party are directly determined by party elites. Examples of these narratives include "PSI is Jokowi's Party," "Jokowism," and other narratives featuring Kaesang or Jokowi (Dongoran, 2024c). PSI tends to be top-down in the process from formulation to decision-making. The forums that provide space for party members are not substantive. In these forums, party members are merely an audience that listens to instructions from party elites. PSI disseminates its agenda through various social media platforms. However, there is no feedback mechanism for the public, and the party's social media administrators often do not respond to comments on each post. PSI does not provide interactive channels, such as online discussion forums or digital, platform-based policy surveys. This demonstrates that the party only uses its digitalization in the

policy program pillar to promote programs and not as a means of joint production for each party's agenda.

One distinctive feature of a digital party is its openness to constituents when formulating programs, objectives, and policy agendas. This ensures that the party can build a base of supporters who are emotionally connected and feel involved in the party's political agenda. Without a deliberative process for decision-making, party members and supporters will become passive audiences (Gerbaudo, 2019). This situation indicates that PSI's digital migration in the policy program pillar has only reached the level of vertical communication channels rather than horizontal discussion spaces. Without deliberative mechanisms, the party cannot integrate the needs, preferences, and experiences of the digital community into its programs. In the context of digital migration, this integration is essential for creating a representative digital institutional structure (Barbera, 2022).

PSI has not established a substantive relationship with its support base. The absence of this deliberative relationship suggests that the party is merely creating an ideological image lacking an affective and structural basis. This also indicates that the party has not transformed the logic of the digital platform into its operations, particularly in the policy program pillar.

4. Public Image

A party's public image is not merely the result of its visual communication strategy; it is also a manifestation of its relationship with its constituents in the digital dimension. A party's image is shaped through intensive, open interaction. This interaction builds affection and emotional bonds between the party and its constituents. The ultimate goal of this interaction is not to increase the party's visibility, but rather to strengthen collective political identity and mobilize its support base (Gerbaudo, 2019).

PSI is a party that is quite active in shaping its public image through digital platforms. Ahead of the 2024 elections, PSI has been active in building a new image with conventional

promotional tools, as evidenced by numerous billboards across Indonesia. PSI consistently shares visual content packaged with a youthful style and hashtags through its social media, such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and X. PSI leader Kaesang Pangarep often appears relaxed when delivering political messages. Technically, PSI has successfully mastered the digital visibility space.

PSI's communication practices and efforts to build its public image do not align with the logic of digital platforms. PSI communication in the digital space is dominated by one-way communication. PSI does not provide a mechanism for developing digital dialogue, nor does it allow the public to comment or engage in shaping the digital narrative. This pattern of communication suggests that PSI's public image is shaped by a broadcasting approach rather than participatory interaction (Fitzpatrick, 2021).

The findings of this study also show that PSI does not provide a mechanism for integrating the party's national public image with candidates' communication strategies at the local level. Candidates do not receive digital support from the center and must develop their campaign narratives in their constituencies. Content from the center tends to promote Kaesang and Jokowi rather than promoting each candidate in the region. PSI has failed to convert its digital visibility into a distributed electoral communication network.

In a complete digital party model, the public image pillar must reflect the horizontal relationship between the party and its constituents. Visibility without a participatory structure cannot drive increased party mobility. Ultimately, digital constituents only play the role of passive spectators (Gerbaudo, 2019). This kind of image is fragile and temporary. Although PSI built a stable digital presence in terms of visibility, it failed to transform this presence into substantive, sustainable relationships with its constituents.

5. Resources

In the context of digital parties, the logic of digital platforms requires parties to transparently manage financial and logistical

resources based on public participation through digital platforms. This digital transformation should encourage an open and accountable funding system and help parties expand their donor base. It also enables parties to distribute resources more evenly (Fitzpatrick, 2021). This model creates a political funding system that isn't dependent on an elite oligarchy but is based on collective, voluntary contributions from the digital community.

Although PSI provides a mechanism for voluntary donations through the PSI wallet on their website, it does not provide an open fund management mechanism. However, research findings show that party funding depends on the party's elite network and businesspeople at the center. The center directly handles the management mechanism. These findings demonstrate that PSI's fund management structure remains centralized and opaque to members and the public. PSI's digitalization of the resource pillar does not address the logic of digital platforms, nor has it become an instrument for party institutionalization, as implied by the resource pillar.

Logistically, campaign resource distribution is not carried out through a platform-based management system, and no investment has been made to develop a complete digital party mechanism. Additionally, there is no mention of a campaign funding allocation scheme that can be tracked or controlled through a digital platform. It is also unclear whether funding allocations are distributed evenly according to the needs of each electoral district in Indonesia.

According to Fitzpatrick (2021), resource institutionalization is an important foundation for parties to build public trust and strengthen their internal structure. However, PSI does not leverage existing digital platforms to promote transparent and accountable governance.

Evaluating PSI's digital migration through the five pillars of the digital party model reveals a pattern of systemic failure to build a party structure based on digital platform logic. Regarding membership, PSI has not established an online community that can be engaged with actively and sustainably. Regarding leadership and candidates, PSI

has not created opportunities for renewal through online selection; rather, decisions are made by the party elite. Regarding the policy program, PSI did not formulate goals, policies, and political agendas with all members and constituents, but rather with the elite. These were then communicated unilaterally. While the party has a high public profile, it lacks meaningful interaction and emotional connections with its supporters. Ultimately, the party is unable to build a superbase. The party's resource pillar does not provide an open and accountable fund management mechanism either.

Conceptually, the imbalance in PSI's digital migration in each pillar of the digital party shows that the digitalization built is only used for visibility and communication media, not structural and institutional transformation. In the context of digital parties, institutional transformation through digital platforms is an absolute prerequisite for building a loyal and militant superbase. Without this, digitalization will only increase visibility without establishing a clear support base (Gerbaudo, 2019). In the context of open proportional elections, such visibility cannot be converted into votes sufficient to pass the parliamentary threshold. This finding forms the basis for further analysis of PSI's failure to build a functional digital infrastructure and influence electoral success.

Failure to Build a Superbase

The evaluation of PSI's digital migration was conducted using Fitzpatrick's five-pillar model framework for digital parties. The five pillars include membership, leaders and candidates, policy programs, public image, and resources (Fitzpatrick, 2021). This conceptual framework is used not only to test the technical integration of a party's digital operations but also to assess the degree to which a party's operations align with the logic of digital platforms. The five pillars serve as indicators of the institutionalization of political parties that utilize digital platforms as a fundamental element of their governance structure.

A superbase is a digital community that is

emotionally connected to a political party. This community actively shares political messages, mobilizes support in the digital space, and becomes a driving force in electoral strategies. Superbases are not merely a party's social media followers; they are organized communities with a collective political identity and structural involvement with the political party they support. The presence of a superbase indicates a party's success in transforming digital platforms into a vibrant, responsive political infrastructure (Gerbaudo, 2019).

PSI's failure to build a superbase is the main symptom of its failure in substantive digital migration. An evaluation of PSI's five pillars revealed that none of the aspects of digital migration that should have supported the institutionalization of the digital community were holistically transformed into the party's structure. PSI did not develop digital mechanisms to connect with its supporters.

Based on observations of several PSI hybrid discussion forums and interview results, it was found that members' presence in these forums was merely symbolic. This indicates pseudo-participation in digital platforms, where members are often trapped in meaningless participation (Gerbaudo, 2019). The relationship between PSI and voters is based solely on content consumption, not participation. This kind of relationship cannot transform visibility into a mass base.

PSI's inability to establish a strong voter base has seriously impacted their electoral success, particularly in Indonesian elections with an open proportional system. This system requires solid party institutions to organize voters through direct candidate representation (Suryana et al., 2020). Without a superbase, PSI lacks the relational network necessary to drive electoral support for each candidate evenly. This explains why PSI's digital visibility is inversely proportional to its vote count in the 2024 legislative elections. PSI lacks a structural bridge connecting the central and local levels during electoral struggles.

PSI's inability to build a superbase stems from the absence of comprehensive digital institutionalization and the failure to transform the logic of digital platforms in party

governance. Using digital platforms only to build an image, lacking participatory spaces, and failing to build emotional connections between the party and its supporters are not only anomalies but also fundamental failures in understanding and interpreting digital, platform-based political strategies.

The Discrepancy Between Digital Visibility and Support Base

The most striking paradox of PSI's electoral failure in the 2024 legislative elections is that the party had a high digital visibility but did not perform well in the elections. PSI dominated public discourse with its youthful image, Jokowiism, and Kaesang's prominent presence on the party's social media pages. However, this dominance was inversely proportional to the number of votes the party received. In many regions, PSI's electability remained low. This indicates a structural disparity between the party's actual electoral capacity and its digital performance.

A party's visibility in the digital space merely reflects digital relations (Gerbaudo, 2019). Digital platforms demand that parties have the capacity to use them for more than just building their image. Digital integration should result in a political institution that can build emotional connections with its supporters (Gerbaudo, 2021b). This means a party's digital communication must convert into institutionalized political affiliation and actively share the party's political messages. Without such affiliation, parties can only compete for public perception, not real electoral preferences.

In an open proportional system, PSI's absence of political affiliation in the regions and loyalty to the candidates they support is a fatal weakness. Barbera explains this issue, stating that parties can strengthen political visibility but cannot form political embeddedness, which is a connection between the party and the voter base through local representation (Barbera, 2022). Many voters recognize PSI, but the central branding cannot be converted into electoral strength through the candidates.

PSI's content distribution model on social media fails to establish a feedback loop that forms the basis for a digital community because it does not build a mechanism for interaction with the audience (Gerbaudo, 2021b). Ultimately, the public becomes merely consumers of the party's political content rather than contributors to its political discourse.

Through the disparity between digital visibility and electoral results, PSI has demonstrated an inability to understand the logic of distributing political work in the digital age. Successful visibility must be distributed among the center, regions, elites, and cadres, as well as between the party and its candidates (Gerbaudo, 2021b). Instead, PSI has focused solely on the visibility of the party and political figures Jokowi and Kaesang. Candidates in regional areas face limitations in enhancing their visibility. This creates a gap between the central narrative and the local level.

The disparity between the party's visibility and electoral viability suggests that unstructured digitalization of the party will fail to fulfill its electoral functions. In an open proportional system, a party's electoral success depends on its ability to distribute power to the smallest units. Without a complete, structured transformation of digital platform logic, parties cannot convert digital capacity into electoral votes.

The Discrepancy Between Digital Visibility and Support Base

In such a system, the symbolic power of the center and the popularity of elite figures do not guarantee significant electoral results unless they are supported by robust party institutions that provide assistance to candidates in their respective electoral districts. The open proportional system encourages intra-party fragmentation, blurring the lines of institutional cohesion. Without a strong structure, it becomes difficult for the party to become a cohesive collective actor (Carey & Shugart, 1995). With this electoral logic, parties can be relied upon not only as administrative political vehicles but also to consolidate candidate votes and become a collective force.

For digital parties, the challenges of an open proportional electoral system are more complex. Digitalization enables parties to expand the reach of their campaigns and communicate with geographically distant audiences. However, the success of this strategy also depends on adequate digital infrastructure. PSI itself experiences constraints in terms of digital infrastructure, both internally and externally. Interviewees complained that Indonesia's digital infrastructure is minimal in rural areas. PSI is also minimal in its investment in the development of the party's digital infrastructure.

In the face of an open proportional electoral system like Indonesia's, the weakness of party digitalization is a vulnerability. A digital platform is an institutional infrastructure that supports the digital institutionalization of a party. According to this conceptual reasoning, the logic of the digital platform fosters the development of the party's collective identity in an inclusive and participatory manner, expands cadre recruitment, and enables balanced management of candidate campaigns. This aligns with the dimensions of party institutionalization, which include systemicity, value identity, autonomy, and public image (Randall & Svåsand, 2002). However, PSI's lack of structured digitalization causes candidates to lack systematic support and have to prepare their campaign strategies and content.

Digital parties should be able to respond to the challenges of an open proportional system, which requires parties to act as facilitators and integrators of candidates' interests. This function can be carried out through the digital platform, which allows for online meetings between candidates, the superbase, and constituents (Gerbaudo, 2019). Digital platforms can also synchronize central and regional campaign strategies. However, PSI, with its centralized, figure-centered communication style, is ultimately unable to fulfill this function.

The absence of this function has two consequences. First, candidates cannot build an electoral base independently in their respective districts because the party does not support them digitally. Second, the party cannot

consolidate the candidates' votes as a collective electoral force. These structural barriers, stemming from the electoral system, further demonstrate PSI's institutional weakness as a party that relies on digital platforms and political figures. This weakness is not only a matter of campaign strategy but also the party's failure to develop a political structure capable of adapting to the electoral system's logic.

The Jokowi-Kaesang Endorsement and Its Impact on PSI

Gerbaudo has illustrated the important role of leadership in a digital party. This leadership is carried out by a hyper-leader or charismatic figure who attracts people to the party and can guide members online and offline. Essentially, this charismatic figure is the face of the party and the main symbol that connects it with its audience (Gerbaudo, 2019). PSI reflected this pattern of a digital party by branding Kaesang's leadership when he became chairman at the end of 2023. PSI associates itself with Indonesian political figure Jokowi and carries the values of Jokowiism. This means that the spirit of Jokowi's leadership is within the party and all its members, and the party looks for others who want to continue Jokowi's fighting spirit. Kaesang, a new figure in PSI, brings new political capital to the party through his biological relationship with Jokowi and helps strengthen its youth branding.

Kaesang's rise to the position of PSI Chairman, as well as the party's association with Jokowi, has resulted in a surge in political visibility. According to interviewees, Kaesang significantly impacted PSI's support, and Jokowi provided the party with moral support to continue growing. Other findings demonstrate Jokowi's significant role in PSI's political development, particularly in anticipation of the 2024 elections. Since 2017, PSI has received assistance from Jokowi to raise funds (Dongoran, 2024a). PSI's commitment to the assistance provided by Jokowi and the spirit of work carried out during his presidency is called Jokowiism (Dongoran, 2024b).

However, this claimed success is superficial and cannot be translated into significant

electoral support. Although Kaesang is a popular figure, his involvement in PSI focuses on his image rather than building the collective structure of the party and its candidates. Gerbaudo has criticized this phenomenon in his writing, noting that hyper-leaders often dominate party digital platforms, which inhibits the strengthening of internal democracy (Gerbaudo, 2021a). Kaesang also harmed PSI. His ascension as chairman sparked negative feelings about dynastic political practices among voters (Siregar & Rahmawati, 2024). These negative sentiments continued to emerge, resulting in a rejection movement in the digital space through the hashtag “Kami Muak” after Kaesang’s ascension (Asih, 2023).

Hyperleaders’ support should be managed through digital platforms to encourage party consolidation with its digital community. In practice, however, PSI has been unable to use these political figures to systematically expand its mass base. PSI’s reliance on political figures overlooks other aspects of competition in an open proportional electoral system, which also requires electable candidates.

PSI’s inability to translate Jokowi and Kaesang’s support into electoral votes demonstrates that, in open proportional elections, the symbolic power of political figures is ineffective without strong internal institutionalization and equitable distribution of power. When political figures only operate at the central level and digital platforms are solely used to promote them, the result is high digital visibility for the party and a weak electoral machine.

CONCLUSION

This research shows that PSI’s failure in the 2024 election was due to the party’s inability to apply the logic of the digital platform to substantive aspects of governance. PSI’s digitalization efforts were only partial and symbolic, failing to encourage the formation of a solid digital structure. Ultimately, PSI was unable to create a superbase that could serve as the party’s political machine. This failure was exacerbated by the absence of structural support for candidates in an open proportional

electoral system, which requires the strengthening of political networks from the central to regional levels.

This phenomenon demonstrates the limitations of the hyperleadership model when it lacks strong digital institutions. Despite receiving political support from Jokowi and Kaesang, PSI was unable to achieve a significant electoral impact. This reinforces the conclusion that a competitive political system, such as Indonesia’s open proportional system, is insufficient if it is only supported by political figures and digital integration that highlights these figures.

These findings imply that, in their migration process, digital parties should not stop at merely increasing communication and visibility. Ultimately, party digitization must transform the party into a new institution. In the context of Indonesian politics, this presents a significant challenge for parties seeking to leverage digital platforms

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